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ABSTRACT

This action research study examined the problem of the loss of commitment to schoolwork by middle level students as evidenced by missing assignments; late work, incomplete work, or both; and an attitude of indifference on the part of the students. The study also reviewed a variety of strategies to improve student learning and students' view of themselves as learners and to increase parent involvement in their children's learning. Participating in this study were seventh- and eighth-grade mathematics students in an economically and culturally diverse urban community in western Illinois. An examination of the percentage of missing, late, or incomplete assignments in 1996-97 for grades 7 and 8 mathematics classes revealed a relationship between missing, late, or incomplete assignments and low grades. Intervention strategies included cooperative learning and multiple intelligences activities, encouragement to increase students' responsibility for their own learning, increased teacher communication with parents, and new classroom management procedures involving parents. The effects of the intervention were assessed by means of surveys for students, parents, and teachers; grade records; parents' responses to written communications; student journals; and classroom observations. Post-intervention data indicated a modest increase in student achievement, increased confidence among students as mathematics learners, improved student self-image, and improved good will between home and school. Thirty appendices include data tables, questionnaires, and sample materials. (Contains 29 references.) (KB)

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ABSTRACT

This report addresses the problem of the loss of commitment to schoolwork by middle level students as evidenced by missing assignments; late work, incomplete work, or both; and an attitude of indifference on the part of students. The targeted population consisted of seventh and eighth grade mathematics students in an economically and culturally diverse urban community located in western Illinois. An emphasis was placed on increasing parental involvement in order to promote student learning.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed a lack of parental involvement, changes in the family structure along with conflicting demands on the family's time, and a lack of student accountability. Additional causes included differing perceptions of educational responsibility on the part of parents and educators, adjustment to middle school, increasing difficulty of curriculum, a general decline in the status of education in the eyes of the community, and students' failure to see the relevance of their schoolwork.

A review of solution strategies documented in research literature together with an analysis of the problem setting resulted in the selection of three major categories of intervention. Teachers employed a variety of strategies to increase student learning including the use of cooperative learning and activities which addressed multiple intelligences. Second, students were encouraged to increase their involvement in and responsibility for their own learning. Finally, parents were given opportunities to increase their involvement in their children's learning.

Post intervention data indicated a modest increase in student achievement, increased confidence among students as mathematics learner, improved student self-image, and improved good will between home and school.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 - PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT	1
General Statement of the Problem	1
Immediate Problem Context	2
The Surrounding Community	5
National Context of the Problem	7
CHAPTER 2 - PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION	11
Problem Evidence	11
Probable Causes	15
CHAPTER 3 - THE SOLUTION STRATEGY	21
Literature Review	21
Project Objectives and Processes	25
Project Action Plan	26
Methods of Assessment	41
CHAPTER 4 - PROJECT RESULTS	42
Historical Description of the Intervention	42
Presentation and Analysis of Results	45
Conclusions and Recommendations	51
APPENDIXES	58

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

In the last few decades, the American public has debated "why Johnny can't read." However, in recent years, the debate has shifted to speculation concerning "why Johnny won't read" or finish his assignments or study for that test. Far too many middle level students have lost the commitment to schoolwork. Evidence of this lack of commitment includes missing assignments; late work, incomplete work, or both; and an attitude of indifference on the part of students. One factor which shapes students' attitudes and, therefore, affects their commitment to schoolwork is how parents perceive their role in the education process. As students reach middle school, schoolwork becomes more challenging for them as well as for their parents; consequently, many parents feel they lack the skills to help their children learn. Drastic changes in the characteristics of the American nuclear family further exacerbate the problem. For instance, along with divorce come feelings of anxiety and stress which affect the amount of time parents devote to their children's education. Even in two-parent families, changing family roles and increased job responsibilities for both parents limit parental involvement. Finally, a general downward shift in the status of education in American society contributes to middle level students' lack of commitment to schoolwork.

Immediate Problem Context

The middle school involved in this project has 623 students enrolled in grades seven and eight. The racial and ethnic makeup is 89.9% White; 5.3% Hispanic; 3.9% Black; and 1.0% Asian, Pacific Islander, or Native American. Currently, this school has no students identified as limited in English proficiency. The attendance rate of 93% falls 0.5% below the state average while the chronic truancy rate of 5.2% more than doubles the 2.3% rate for the state. The number of low income students at this school, 19.7% of the total school population, is somewhat more than half the state average of 34.9%.

Two full-time administrators, the principal and assistant principal, head the middle school staff. The school employs 36 full-time and 3 part-time teachers. A full-time counselor, full-time librarian, and a part-time health aide assist both staff and students. Five aides assist in Educably Mentally Handicapped (EMH), Trainably Mentally Handicapped (TMH), Learning Disabled (LD), and hearing-impaired classrooms as well as in the library. The school employs two full-time secretaries.

Of the 39 teachers, 13% have fewer than 5 years of teaching experience, 31% have between 5 and 15 years, 23% have between 15 and 25 years, and 33% have more than 25 years of teaching experience. Of the staff members, 56% have attained only a bachelor's degree, 23% have completed a master's degree, and 21% have reached the top of the salary scale with a master's degree plus 30 or more hours of graduate work. This middle school employs one Black staff member and one Hispanic staff member. These individuals constitute a 5% minority among staff members, significantly below the student minority enrollment of 9.2%.

The middle school occupies several acres on the eastern side of town in a neighborhood identifiable as middle class. A segment of the student population, however, comes from a low-income housing unit within three blocks of the school. Within three blocks in the opposite direction, homes sell in the \$200,000 to \$400,000

price range. This housing pattern reflects the wide range of economic backgrounds among the students.

The 32-year-old building has two floors of classrooms, an auditorium with a seating capacity over 900, full cafeteria facilities, and a gymnasium which is occupied every period of the school day. To satisfy the state requirement that each child have daily physical education, two of these classes usually meet in the gymnasium and one elsewhere in the building each period of the day. The school houses laboratory facilities for science, life skills, industrial technology, and computer science. Currently, the library is undergoing technological changes, including Internet access.

Each grade level has two teams of students, a gold team and a black team. The team concept allows four teachers - one each in English, mathematics, science, and social studies - to share the same group of students. Such a system fosters opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and promotes a sense of group identification among the students.

The 1996 School Report Card states this school's average class size as 27.5 students, considerably above the state average of 22.9. Even this 27.5 figure does not approach accuracy because of the inclusion of special education classes, most of which have 12 or fewer students. More typical classes average 30 students.

In theory, computers choose students randomly for the two teams at each grade level. In practice, however, a number of exceptions to random selection exist. One team per grade level contains the Program for Academically Talented Students (PATS). This self-contained group of approximately 25 students meets together for classes in English, mathematics, science, and social studies. In addition, the school offers another accelerated mathematics class per grade. The school mainstreams its EMH students for three periods a day but keeps its TMH students totally self-contained. The middle school houses the district's middle level hearing-impaired class, mainstreaming those students whenever possible. Two full-time teachers and one half-time teacher in the LD

program provide classes in English, mathematics, science, and social studies at each grade level. These teachers also make themselves available as a resource for mainstreamed LD students. Even though this school no longer qualifies as a Title I school, an Assist program provides classes in English and mathematics for those students who would previously have qualified for Title I.

The students attend eight classes daily for a total of 6 hours and 57 minutes. Seven of the periods are 45 minutes in length with the first period of the day having 3 extra minutes for administrative purposes. Every student has a 30-minute lunch period. Classes in English, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, and Reading-Advisory-Preparation (RAP) meet daily for the entire year. Students take one semester each of life skills and industrial technology and one quarter each of art, computer science, health, and vocal music. The 45-minute class period approaches or equals the state average for mathematics, science, and social studies but falls far short of the 90-minute state average for English. Because of the latter discrepancy, most of the RAP classes have a strong language arts component. Approximately one sixth of the student body attends band, orchestra, or choir rehearsals during RAP time; these students, therefore, miss out on most of the regular RAP activities, including watching the 12-minute news segment on Channel One.

This middle school has a strong extracurricular sports program for both boys and girls. All students may participate in basketball, swimming, tennis, and track. Additionally, girls may participate in volleyball and cheerleading; boys may choose wrestling. Other extracurricular activities include the school newspaper; yearbook; a yearly play; performing groups in band, orchestra, and choir; and a number of Trendsetter (anti-drug) groups whose activities address a wide variety of student interests.

The Surrounding Community

The middle school is located in a community of 43,202 people (1990 U.S. Census) which sits on the banks of the Mississippi River in western Illinois. It encompasses a diverse urban community whose economy traditionally has been based on manufacturing. Today, insurance and finance have a strong presence as do companies in the computer and technology fields. Major industries in the area include farm implement companies, Deere & Company and Case/IH; the Rock Island Arsenal; and medical facilities, Genesis Medial Center, Trinity Medical Center, and Illini Hospital. ALCOA, MidAmerican Energy Company, John Deere Insurance, and Eagle Food Center round out the top employers in the area.

According to the 1990 census figures, the racial makeup of this city includes 94.1% Whites, 2.0% Blacks, 0.9% Asians or Pacific Islanders, 0.2% Native Americans, and 2.8% others. These figures include 2,939 people of Hispanic origin.

From a socioeconomic viewpoint, 10.3% of the city's population falls below the poverty level. The percentage of school-age children below the poverty level, however, reaches 27.7%, nearly three times the community's percentage.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, several major economic changes occurred in this city and the Quad City area. A number of plants closed, particularly in the farm implement industry. These closings, in turn, had a ripple effect on various aspects of the community. For example, many people lost their jobs, took cuts in pay, or accepted lower-paying jobs. The same situation forced other people to retire early or to relocate in order to gain employment. In many families, it became necessary for the mother, who had previously been a full-time homemaker, to secure employment simply to make ends meet. Furthermore, the area lost much of its middle-class population, including many families with school-age children. This middle-class exodus led to a decreased school population. Ultimately, six elementary schools and one junior high school in the city closed. Following the closings, the ninth grade students moved to the high school.

What had been junior high schools became middle schools housing only seventh graders and eighth graders.

In the last few years, this city and the surrounding Quad City area have seen the beginnings of an economic rebirth. The introduction of riverboat gambling, an increase in hotel construction, the addition of a major convention center, and the revitalization of area downtowns hold out the promise of continued economic growth.

Currently, the school district is a unit district made up of 13 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and 1 high school. The district also provides an early childhood center for preschool at-risk students and a special education center for students who are severely handicapped, either physically or mentally. Furthermore, the district staffs a neighboring residential facility for troubled male youth. Alternative schools serve middle school students and high school students.

This city's 468 teachers average 15.1 years in the classroom. Females represent 71.3% of the teaching staff. The racial makeup is 97.4% White, 1.5% Hispanic, and 1.1% Black. Of the teaching staff districtwide, 46.9% have at least a master's degree. The pupil to teacher ratio is 20.4:1, and the pupil to administrator ratio is 265:1, both ratios above state averages. The annual operating expenditure per pupil is \$4,868, significantly below the state average of \$5,922.

For the most part, the local community has been supportive of its schools and educational programs. The last referendum, held nine years ago amid economic hardships, passed on the second vote. Many area businesses have developed partnerships with individual schools, supporting the schools by providing materials, grants for projects, speakers for the classroom, and connections with the business community. Furthermore, the Public Schools Foundation raises money to provide grants for classroom projects and supplies. Parent-teacher groups, Big Brother-Big Sister programs, park board activities, and mentoring programs demonstrate other community connections with the schools.

National Context of the Problem

Students today show a lack of commitment to schoolwork. One factor contributing to this lack of commitment is heavy teacher workload. In middle schools and high schools, teachers typically work with 150 students per day. The task of helping that many students would be difficult enough if all students learned in the same way and at the same pace. Because students have different dominant learning styles and a wide range of abilities and achievement levels, the task becomes that much more difficult. Furthermore, communicating with parents individually about their children's lack of commitment becomes a daunting task for the teacher.

Also contributing to the lack of student commitment to schoolwork is the nature of parental involvement in the middle school and high school years. Whereas parents are often actively and positively involved in the elementary grades, many withdraw or become negatively involved when their children attend middle school and high school.

Certainly, many obstacles hinder parents' involvement in their older children's education. In the first place, today's parents lead very busy lives and cannot attend many school events. The problem is magnified for single parents. Furthermore, according to Chavkin and Williams, many parents have lost the enthusiasm for involvement they had when their children were younger (as cited in Foster-Harrison & Peel, 1995). Because of the middle school structure itself, following a student's progress demands that parents see as many as seven teachers.

Attitudes and perceptions of principals, teachers, and parents can create barriers to parental involvement. These three groups often see the role of parents differently. Principals often expect parents to assume traditional supporting roles, such as attending meetings or chaperoning school events while parents often want more involvement in decision making (Sevener, 1990). Teachers often interpret lack of parental involvement as a sign of apathy. However, when asked why they are not involved in their children's education, parents include among their responses work

responsibilities, health problems, and economic differences between themselves and teachers.

Finally, students themselves share culpability for their own lack of commitment to schoolwork. Faced with activities and responsibilities which compete for their time and interest, many students today do not make education a high priority. Middle level and high school students often resist believing what teachers and parents stress - that a direct, positive relationship exists between mastery of schoolwork and college entrance or employability. Although they often cannot set reasonable educational goals for themselves, students frequently expect parents, who have helped their children set goals in the past, to withdraw from the school setting. Furthermore, for many students, years of poor performance on standardized tests plus social pressure to avoid high grades lower student expectations of success and their perception of themselves as self-directed learners (Paris, Lawton, Turner, & Roth, 1991).

An examination of the literature suggests that successful schools address all three components of student learning: teachers, parents, and students. Addressing only one of these components greatly diminishes the chances of increasing student commitment to schoolwork. Success also depends on recognizing that a change in one component affects the other two.

Sadly, few middle level and high school teachers receive training in how to deal with parents (Sevener, 1990) and often see parents only when an academic or disciplinary problem has developed. Furthermore, because school districts often lack long range plans for professional development, many teachers remain unaware of new teaching strategies to increase student motivation.

Parents should not abdicate their responsibility to be involved in their children's education but rather modify their involvement to meet the changing needs of their older children. In 1980, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in Portland, Oregon, "concluded...that parent participation has a positive effect on children's achievement,

and the more extensive the participation, the more positive the results" (Sevener, 1990, p. 1). Furthermore, Salerno and Fink noted that educators have recognized parental involvement as a decisive factor in the improvement of attitude and learning (as cited in Balli, 1996). "Parent involvement, then, is to schooling what a second oarsman is to the boat - just a surer, easier, and faster way to get it where it's going" (Sevener, 1990, p. 4).

Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools reported in 1989 that parents become more involved with the education process when the school welcomes their participation. Most parents want to be involved, and when they request guidance, schools need to welcome parents' participation, regardless of economic status, race, marital status, educational attainment, or family size (Foster-Harrison & Peel, 1995).

Educators need to understand that not all parental involvement leads to the improvement of student commitment to schoolwork and achievement. The Family Center at Johns Hopkins University suggests several effective parental involvement practices. These practices include maintaining communication between home and school, family volunteering at school, attending school events, taking part in school advisory groups, and collaborating with community resources which assist the schools (Hollifield, 1995).

Students at the middle and high school level must be given the opportunity to take increased charge of their own learning. Teachers and parents must hold students accountable for schoolwork and allow students to fail.

Putting middle school research into practice, Family Center researchers Joyce Epstein and Karen Salinas along with Vivian Jackson of the Baltimore City Fund for Educational Excellence and teachers from two Baltimore City middle schools have begun a program entitled Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS). This program establishes an interactive homework process involving teachers, students, and

parents. The TIPS program is constructed around language arts, mathematics, science, and health. Teachers increase communication with parents, students share with their families skills and ideas learned at school, and parents actively participate in homework (Hollifield, 1995). Other activities used by middle schools to encourage partnership among teachers, parents, and students include training opportunities for parents, homework hotlines, personnel directories, promotion and recognition of parent and student efforts, informal social affairs, parent surveys, bulletins and newsletters, telephone trees, and school welcoming committees (Foster-Harrison & Peel, 1995).

The wealth of research on the problem of middle school students' lack of commitment to schoolwork suggests that all three partners in student achievement - teachers, parents, and students - share the responsibility for the problem and the key to the solution.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of middle level students' lack of commitment to their schoolwork, grade books from the 1996-1997 school year were examined and a table was created illustrating the percentage of missing assignments and late or incomplete assignments for the fourth quarter for five mathematics classes each in seventh and eighth grades (Appendix A and Appendix B). In addition, teaching colleagues completed a survey which concerned students' missing, late, or incomplete work; lack of student motivation; and homework policies (Appendix C and Appendix D). Further information was gathered from teacher records of parent contacts made during the 1996-1997 school year in response to a lack of student achievement (Appendix E). Finally, comments made by teachers on the fourth quarter mid-term progress reports relating to missing, late, or incomplete assignments and to a lack of effort on the part of students were tabulated (Appendix F).

The information for Table 1 was gathered fourth quarter from five seventh grade classes totaling 134 students. Two of the classes had 25 assignments, two had 26 assignments, and one class had 19 assignments. Although the percentage of missing assignments was less than 4% in four of the classes, the percentage of late or incomplete assignments was noticeably higher in all but one class. Obviously, late and incomplete work was a recognizable problem for the seventh graders.

Table 1

Seventh Grade Fourth Quarter Assignments

Class	Missing		Late/Incomplete		Complete		Total Assignments
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1	9	1.3	43	6.1	648	92.6	700
2	15	2.4	40	6.4	570	91.2	625
3	56	6.9	113	14.0	637	79.0	806
4	9	1.4	66	10.2	575	88.5	650
5	15	3.2	18	3.8	442	93.1	475
Total	104	3.2	280	8.6	2872	88.2	3256

Of the 134 seventh grade students, 28 (20.9%) had more than 20% of their assignments either late, incomplete, or missing. The final quarter grades for these 28 students are represented in Table 2. Over 64% of those students who had more than 20% of their assignments late, incomplete, or missing received as a quarter grade either a D or F. An analysis of the data leads one to conclude that a relationship exists between missing, late, or incomplete assignments and low grades.

Table 2

Grades of 28 Seventh Grade Students Having More Than 20% of Their Assignments Missing, Late, or Incomplete

Grade	Number of students	Percent of students
A	0	0
B	2	7.1%
C	8	28.6%
D	6	21.4%
F	12	42.9%

From a different perspective, a total of 26 seventh grade students had either D or F as a final grade for the quarter. Of these students, 100% had at least one assignment that was either late, missing, or incomplete. Table 3 shows that 58% of those receiving a quarter grade of D and almost 86% of those receiving a quarter grade of F had 20% or more of their assignments missing, late, or incomplete. There is a definite relationship between low achievement and lack of commitment to homework.

Table 3

Percentage of Missing, Late, or Incomplete Assignments for Seventh Grade Students Receiving D or F Quarter Grades

Grade	Less than 20%		20 - 40 %		More than 40%	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
D (12 students)	5	41.7%	6	50.0%	1	8.3%
F (14 students)	2	14.3%	6	42.9%	6	42.9%

The information in Table 4 was gathered fourth quarter from five eighth grade classes totaling 133 students. Each of the classes had 21 assignments. Interestingly, one out of four assignments was missing for the eighth grade students.

Table 4

Eighth Grade Fourth Quarter Assignments

Class	Missing		Late/Incomplete		Complete		Total Assignments
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1	151	24.8	18	3.0	440	72.2	609
2	126	24.0	5	1.0	394	75.0	525
3	103	17.5	8	1.4	477	81.1	588
4	157	31.2	10	2.0	337	66.9	504
5	164	28.9	5	0.9	398	70.2	567
Total	701	25.1	46	1.6	2046	73.3	2793

A number of factors could account for the difference in percentages of missing assignments between the two grades. Teachers generally assume, based on their experiences, that seventh graders as a whole try to please their teachers more than eighth graders do. The parents of seventh graders may be more involved in their children's education since middle school is a new experience. Furthermore, seventh grade policy in the targeted school requires students to stay after school to complete missing assignments. On the other hand, in order to prepare students for high school, eighth grade policy puts limits on the amount of time students have to complete missing work.

Table 5 displays information compiled from progress reports sent to students whose academic progress concerned the teacher at midterm for the fourth quarter of the 1996-1997 school year. The teacher could check up to 3 comments from a list of 20. Table 5 shows the percentages for the four most commonly checked comments related to student commitment to schoolwork as well as to academic achievement. The seventh grade had 134 students in five classes with 36 students receiving such a progress report. Of the 123 eighth grade students in the five recorded classes, 51 received such a progress report. The percentages in the last four columns are based on students receiving reports, not the total number of students enrolled. For example, the 55.6% figure under missing homework in the seventh grade represents 20 students out of the 36 students receiving a report, not 20 out of 134 students in seventh grade classes.

Table 5

Mid-term Progress Report Comments for Fourth Quarter

Class	Students receiving a report	Missing homework		Capable of better work		Fails to seek extra help		Fails quizzes and tests	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total 7th	36	20	55.6	11	30.6	25	69.4	33	91.7
Total 8th	51	26	51.0	8	15.7	13	25.5	13	25.5

Over 50% of the seventh and eighth grade students receiving these negative progress reports had missing homework. A definite relationship existed between low grades and missing homework. Further indicating an apparent lack of commitment to schoolwork, nearly 70% of these same seventh grade students failed to seek additional help.

The seventh grade mathematics teacher made 68 phone calls to families of mathematics students in the 1996-1997 school year. Eight of these calls concerned discipline issues; the remaining 60 dealt only with academic issues. Missing, late, or incomplete homework was mentioned in 75% of these academic calls. The eighth grade teacher made a total of 44 calls, all dealing with academic issues. Eight of these calls also dealt with discipline issues. Of these 44 calls, 50% included concerns about late, missing, or incomplete homework.

A total of 79 teachers in three middle schools, including the target school, responded to the teacher survey (Appendix D). Sixty-two percent of the responding teachers assign homework often or every day. Homework represents at least 25% of the grade for 59% of the responding teachers; moreover, 15% of the teachers count homework as over half of the total grade. Although the great majority of teachers accept late assignments and encourage students to seek help with homework, 95% of the surveyed teachers reported that late and missing work constituted a problem.

Probable Causes

A search of the local context to determine probable causes for middle level students' lack of commitment to schoolwork identified four main problem areas. These four areas are students' attitudes and behaviors, the challenge of transition to the middle school environment, students' family situations, and societal values.

First of all, students' attitudes and behaviors constitute part of the problem. As they encounter more opportunities for participation in activities both in and out of school, middle level students may become overly involved to the extent that schoolwork suffers.

When involved in several clubs and organizations, such as student council, newspaper or yearbook staffs, anti-drug groups, and academic clubs, children this age have difficulty with time management. Performing groups, such as band, orchestra, choir, or drama, require hours of rehearsal. Athletic teams also demand hours of practice each day. In addition to participating in these school related activities, students of today participate in a variety of out-of-school activities. Many students this age have classes at church and other church-related responsibilities. Community team sports, part-time jobs, and classes for a variety of special interests take additional time. In a survey conducted at the beginning of this school year, 43% of the 228 students in the targeted seventh and eighth grade mathematics classes felt that their homework suffered because of other activities (Appendix G and Appendix H). Of the same 228 students, 11% felt that their homework suffered frequently or every day. To exacerbate the commitment problem, students today realize that few, if any, of them will be retained at the end of the school year, no matter how poorly they perform academically. In fact, in the last three years at the targeted school, only 3 students were retained out of a total of nearly 2,000 students. Without this accountability, students lack the motivation to perform at their highest ability level. Furthermore, the attitude of unmotivated students can become contagious, and more students can lose their commitment to schoolwork. Finally, students often question the relationship between their schoolwork and the real world. Failing to see this connection, students may resist learning.

The second problem area for commitment to schoolwork deals with the challenge of transition from elementary to middle school. For many students, middle school presents the first experience having seven or eight teachers with seven or eight teaching styles and sets of expectations. Because of teacher certification requirements for middle level teachers, the teachers are generally subject matter specialists and tend to present material in more depth than elementary teachers do. One would expect students as they mature to be able to handle more complex material each year. Students who had

perceived themselves generally as average or above average students in elementary school now may view themselves more critically as good students in some subjects and poor students in others. They may give up on those subjects in which they feel inadequate. Another stumbling block to a smooth transition to middle school is students' prior experience with homework. The six elementary feeder schools of the targeted population do not have a consistent policy concerning homework. In some of the elementary schools, homework is a rarity; in others, it is the norm. Students for whom homework is new may become frustrated and not do the work.

Students' family situations have a profound effect on their commitment to schoolwork. For example, the middle school child frequently has increased responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings, doing household chores, or even working part-time. Time required for these responsibilities cuts into homework time and healthy leisure time. Parents themselves do not necessarily have a realistic concept of the time management problems which young teens face. Also, student mobility affects learning. Many students in middle school have attended more than one elementary school. Whether such mobility occurred because of changes in parents' jobs, family economic status, or custody arrangements, such students often have gaps in their knowledge and may face a more difficult transition to middle school. Moreover, when students move during the middle school years themselves, the adjustment to a new environment puts these students at great risk. Because the subject matter, their peers, and their environment are all unfamiliar, such students often experience frustration followed by a lack of commitment to their schoolwork. They simply see no hope of success. Furthermore, parents of middle school students often tell teachers at conference time that they feel inadequate to help their children in a particular subject area because the curriculum is new to them, they themselves were unsuccessful students, or they have been out of school too long. Parents also cite their children's refusal to accept help with schoolwork and the children's reluctance to have parents

involved at school. Unfortunately, some parents have a negative attitude towards school because of their own educational experiences; such parents often transfer negativity to their children.

The final stumbling block to students' commitment to schoolwork is society's devaluing the importance of education and educators. One need only point to teacher salary schedules, court cases favoring students' rights over those of teachers, media glorification of athletes and celebrities, and lack of educational funding by state legislatures to see that education has a low priority and educators rank low in public esteem. Furthermore, a prevailing attitude exists that individuals are often not held accountable for their actions. Students' failure to succeed, according to this rationale, results from inadequacies in the educational system. This prevailing attitude allows students to abdicate any responsibility for their own learning.

In summary, middle level students' lack of commitment to their schoolwork may result from a complexity of problems. These probable causes include the students' attitudes and behaviors, the transition to the middle level environment, family situations, and societal values.

A review of the literature suggested a number of probable causes for the lack of commitment to schoolwork by middle level students. According to McAdams (1994), American students as compared to students in other countries lack enthusiasm and commitment to schoolwork in large part because they do not anticipate that knowledge learned in school will be necessary for and applicable to success in the real world. Although many students show an interest in getting high grades, they expect to earn those grades with a minimum of effort. Many school districts practice social promotion, a policy which reinforces the perception that students are not accountable. Furthermore, middle schoolers experience peer pressure to choose the path of least effort and not to excel in academics (King & Allen, 1995).

Middle school represents a critical time for students in terms of their social and academic health. The transition to middle school coincides with the onset of adolescence. At the same time that students are struggling with physical and emotional changes and questions of self-esteem, the educational system expects them to become more responsible for their learning. When educators do not take into account this traumatic time in children's lives, students may flounder. Young adolescents need the support, guidance, and wisdom of their teachers in order to develop responsibility for their own learning (Watson, 1978).

An examination of the literature underscored the important role parents play in their children's education. "The evidence is clear that parental encouragement, activities, and interest at home and participation in schools and classrooms affect children's achievement, attitudes, and aspirations, even after student ability and family socioeconomic status are taken into account" (Epstein, 1987, p. 120). When parental support is missing, students are less likely to succeed or show motivation to learn. Parents who do not make their children's education a priority encourage children to devalue education. Parents who overtly display disrespect for teachers and the educational system sabotage teachers' ability to teach (Rimm, 1997). Ironically, when students enter middle school and need additional support for a smooth transition, parents traditionally have decreased their involvement in their children's education, both at school and at home. A number of factors contribute to this decreased participation. Some parents lose confidence in their ability to help their children with the subject matter itself (Leitch & Tangri, 1988). Furthermore, many parents have become weary of the education process by the time their children enter middle school. For other parents, increased work demands and family responsibilities take their toll (Foster-Harrison & Peel, 1995).

Finally, a review of the literature suggested the effect that society in general has on students' commitment to schoolwork. On a daily basis, the media presents society with

a litany of hindrances to learning which students of today face from poverty to single parent households to a lack of positive role models. Students may use the reasoning that they do not have a chance to succeed as an excuse to make little effort in their schoolwork. While students in these situations often unrealistically see themselves as the next athletic superstar or lottery winner, they do not expect to achieve success through education (Watson, 1978).

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Many researchers have concluded that education is the shared responsibility of teachers, parents, and students. Therefore, all three groups need to be involved in solving the problem of middle level students' loss of commitment to their schoolwork. Parents and students need to be considered coproducers of education in partnership with the school (Davies, 1987). Although the three groups must work together rather than in isolation, specific interventions exist for each group.

Obviously, teachers are the ultimate designers of curriculum and implementers of educational strategies. It is the teacher's responsibility through motivation and readiness activities to guarantee that students are ready to think and learn (Merrenbloom, 1992). The toxic social world children live in today characterized by violence, poverty, drugs, gangs, disruption of family relationships, and lack of adult supervision hinders children's readiness to learn (Garbarino, 1997). Teachers must apply strategies to help children feel safe enough to learn. Students need opportunities to learn social and emotional skills if they are to maximize academic learning and, ultimately, find meaningful work after formal education (Cummings & Haggerty, 1997). To aid students in learning these skills, teachers can incorporate cooperative learning activities in the curriculum. In addition, teachers need to address the full spectrum of multiple intelligences, giving students every opportunity to use the special abilities they have (Chapman, 1993).

Teachers can also employ a number of strategies to keep parents informed about and involved in their children's education. Beyond the typical parent surveys, school newsletters, or suggested reading lists, teachers can develop and send home educational activities which parents can use with their children (Moles, 1987). These interactive homework activities should include suggestions for overcoming typical obstacles to completing homework (Epstein, 1992). Although time-consuming, another effective method of keeping parents informed and involved is a personal phone contact (McAfee, 1987).

Finally, teachers must demand student accountability. Students should not be rewarded for their intelligence, but for their performance. To defeat underachievement, teachers must devise activities which take advantage of students' strengths and interests and counter students' weaknesses (Rimm, 1997).

Of course, no teacher-initiated strategy can lead to students' increased learning without the students' acceptance of responsibility for their own learning. Although education is a right, students who are uninterested in schoolwork forfeit that right and must re-earn it (Duke, 1996). Finding a balance in shared responsibility demands student participation. For students to achieve maximum success in school, they need to accept a number of responsibilities. They must attend class every day. They must come prepared both mentally and physically. In the classroom, they must demonstrate on-task behavior and a willingness to learn from their own mistakes (Culyer, 1988).

Students must be made to realize they are not merely passive receivers of education; indeed, they are in charge of their own learning, creating it with the help of parents and teachers (Watson, 1978). Students are the communication link between school and home; they have the potential to draw parents into more active involvement. Ideally, with more parent interest, students will see a connection between school and the world in which they live.

A variety of tools can help students take responsibility for their own learning, including journals, goal setting, study skills programs, and cooperative learning. Through the use of reflective journals, students can develop their metacognitive skills (Fusco & Fountain, 1992). Students who think about their thinking take more ownership of their education. Furthermore, a well-developed study skills program facilitates students' taking charge of their learning (Laase, 1996).

Parents, the third component in successful education, have both rights and responsibilities in their involvement in their children's education (Henniger, 1987). Without this parental involvement, students may not reach their full potential. An article in The New York Times stated, "In surveys, teachers say the lack of parent involvement is more damaging to education than a lack of money for the schools or a lack of discipline among the students" (as cited in PTA Newsletter, 1987).

The problem is often that parents want to be involved but do not know how to achieve this involvement. Parents must be made aware of the myriad of opportunities to participate in school life. In addition to serving as room mothers, chaperoning field trips, and attending children's performances, parents can also involve themselves as reading partners, classroom aides, and policy makers. In fact, some schools require parents to pledge a given amount of volunteer time at the school. Another opportunity for parents to become involved is to volunteer as tutors within their children's classroom (Hester, 1989). Working parents can also share their business knowledge with students in the classroom to help children relate their learning to the outside world. Finally, some districts involve the parents in a variety of aspects of decision making. Helping to set policy, serving as members of search and selection committees to hire administrators, and helping to plan budget and curriculum are among the possibilities (Davies, 1987).

Parents are more eager to participate when they have a positive feeling about their children's school. When teachers make a positive contact with the home, they strengthen the bond between home and school. With this bond in place, parents more

readily accept a contact about a problem with their child. Positive contacts may include phone calls, newsletter features, good news notes praising accomplishments of the students, invitations to school functions, and phone conferences for those parents who are unable to attend in person (Landerholm & Karr, 1988). In an innovative program implemented in Idaho and West Virginia, districts awarded certificates to parents, as well as to the students, for successful completion of a reading program. In this program, parents committed themselves to read to their children 15 minutes per day for a nine-week period (Truby, 1987). Parents also need to remember that communication is a two-way street (Leitch & Tangri, 1988). They must, at times, assume the responsibility for initiating contact with the school.

Parents have tremendous power to affect their children's achievement. Not only do they have life skills and knowledge to share, but by being involved in their children's schooling, they also send the message that school is important (Hester, 1989). Parents will find it easier to assist their children if they are provided a list of concrete examples of how to help their children learn, from setting up a study environment to supervising homework completion to acknowledging student performance (Sandfort, 1987).

In summary, solving the problem of middle level students' loss of commitment to their schoolwork requires a concerted effort by teachers, students, and parents. Teachers must implement effective strategies. Students must accept greater responsibility for their own learning. Parents must actively involve themselves in their children's education. If each group does its part, significant improvement can take place.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of increased teacher communication with parents, during the period of August 1997 through January 1998, parents of the seventh and eighth grade students from the targeted mathematics classes will increase their involvement in their children's learning, as measured by parent surveys and teacher records.

Processes to be used to implement this objective include the following:

1. Develop written communications from teachers to parents.
2. Increase the number of phone contacts between teachers and parents.
3. Encourage parents through written and phone contacts to visit school for open house, conferences, student performances, and classroom visitation.

As a result of increased emphasis on timely completion of schoolwork and on use of cooperative learning and multiple intelligence theory, during the period of August 1997 through January 1998, seventh and eighth grade students from the targeted mathematics classes will improve their achievement, as measured by grades, teacher observations, and teacher records.

Processes to be used to implement this objective include the following:

1. Increase communications with parents regarding the timely completion of homework.
2. Implement changes in the curriculum.
3. Apply new procedures in classroom management.

As a result of teachers' increased positive interaction with parents and students, during the period of August 1997 through January 1998, seventh and eighth grade students from the targeted mathematics classes will view themselves more positively as learners, as measured by student surveys and journals.

Processes to be used to implement this objective include the following:

1. Implement changes in the curriculum.
2. Implement positive contacts with the home.
3. Emphasize recognition of positive learning efforts.
4. Develop student surveys.
5. Require students to keep reflective journals.

Project Action Plan

OBJECTIVE 1 Parents will increase their involvement in their children's learning.

PROCESS 1 Written communications from teachers to parents will be developed.

1. A parent survey will be developed during the summer of 1997 (Appendix I).
2. The parent survey will be sent home the first week of school.
3. The results of the parent survey will be tabulated as the surveys come in (Appendix J).
4. Teachers will each send home a minimum of three positive "good news" notes to parents per week, beginning the second week of school.
5. Teachers will develop a weekly review note form for students to fill out in RAP class, take home, and return signed by a parent (Appendix K).
6. Prior to starting each chapter in mathematics, teachers will send home a letter identifying chapter topics and supplies needed by students (Samples - Appendix L and Appendix M).
7. Teachers will develop and send home a list of tips for parents to help their children succeed (Appendix N).
8. Teachers will keep a record of written communications (Appendix O and Appendix P).
9. Teachers will develop a second parent survey to be sent home during January of 1998, based on first semester experiences (Appendix Q).
10. The results of the parent survey will be tabulated as the surveys come in (Appendix R).

PROCESS 2 The number of phone contacts between teachers and parents will be increased.

1. During the first quarter, teachers will contact each RAP member's home to introduce themselves.

2. The teachers will each make at least one positive phone call to parents per week, beginning the fifth week of school.

3. Teachers will keep a record of phone contacts (Appendix O and Appendix P).

PROCESS 3 Parents will be encouraged to visit school.

1. Announcements about open house, conferences, and other upcoming events will be part of the Classroom Connection message the week prior to the event.

2. Invitations to open house will be completed in RAP classes and sent home.

3. During phone conversations, parents will be reminded of upcoming opportunities to visit school, such as open house, conferences, and American Education Week.

4. Teachers will invite parents and students to a homework seminar to develop positive homework routines (Appendix S).

5. Teachers will keep a record of parent attendance at open house, conferences, and homework seminar (Appendix O and Appendix P).

OBJECTIVE 2 Seventh and eighth grade mathematics students will improve their achievement.

PROCESS 1 Communications with parents will be increased when completion of homework becomes a problem.

1. A phone contact will be attempted when a student has three missing assignments in a grading period.

2. A phone contact will be attempted when a student has three late assignments in a grading period.

3. Parents will be asked to sign each completed homework assignment, starting with the first assignment. Teachers will record parent responses.

4. At least 20 at-risk students will be identified by missing/late/incomplete homework or low grades at the end of the fifth week.

5. After the at-risk students have been identified, a phone contact with the parent will be made, followed by weekly math progress reports until a significant, consistent improvement is shown (Appendix T).

6. Teachers will keep a record of these parent contacts and document identified students' progress.

PROCESS 2 Changes in the curriculum will be implemented.

1. Teachers will include a minimum of fifteen minutes a week of cooperative learning activities, beginning with the second week (Sample -Appendix U).

2. Teachers will implement weekly activities to address students' multiple intelligences, beginning with the second week (Sample - Appendix V).

3. Beginning with the second week, teacher journals will contain observations regarding the success of cooperative learning activities and multiple intelligence activities (Sample - Appendix W and Appendix X).

PROCESS 3 New procedures in classroom management will be applied.

1. Parents will be asked to sign each completed homework assignment, starting with the first assignment.

2. Teachers will offer a weekly reward for classes that have all assignments completed and turned in on time, starting with the fifth week.

3. Teachers will record parents' signatures and keep track of the classes' eligibility for the weekly reward.

OBJECTIVE 3 Seventh and eighth grade mathematics students will view themselves more positively as learners.

PROCESS 1 Changes in the curriculum will be implemented.

1. Students will participate in a minimum of fifteen minutes a week of cooperative learning activities, beginning with the second week.

2. Students will participate in weekly activities which address their multiple intelligences, beginning with the second week.

3. In their journals, students will reflect on their classroom activities, including those which dealt with cooperative learning and multiple intelligences.
4. A student survey will be developed in the summer of 1997 (Appendix G).
5. Students will complete the survey in class the first week of school.
6. Teachers will tabulate the results of the student survey (Appendix H).
7. A second student survey will be developed, based on experiences during the first semester (Appendix Y).
8. Students will complete the second student survey during the eighteenth week.
9. Teachers will tabulate the results of the second student survey (Appendix Z).

PROCESS 2 Positive contacts with the home will be implemented.

1. Teachers will each send home a minimum of three positive "good news" notes each week, starting with the second week of school.
2. Teachers will each make at least one positive phone contact with parents weekly, starting with the fifth week of school.
3. For each progress report sent home at midterm (fifth week and thirteenth week), teachers will attempt to include at least one positive comment (Appendix O and Appendix P).

PROCESS 3 Recognition of positive learning efforts will be emphasized.

1. Teachers will establish a quarterly honor roll for students completing 100% of their assignments on time.
2. Teachers will award certificates to students achieving this honor roll status (Appendix AA).

Implementation Plan

Week 1

1. Distribute teacher survey. Collect by end of week.
2. Send home parent survey. Collect as they are returned.
3. Distribute student survey. Collect the same period.

4. Send home Chapter 1 letter. (Other chapter letters will be sent home three to five days prior to introducing the chapter to the students.)
5. Send home tips to parents sheet.
6. Begin phone contacts with parents of RAP students.
7. Begin phone contact records.
8. Starting with the first assignment, ask parents to sign each completed assignment before it is turned in.
9. Note in grade book those papers that have parent signatures.

Week 2

1. Continue contacting parents of RAP students.
2. Note in grade book those assignments with parent signatures.
3. Continue collecting parent surveys and tabulating results.
4. Tabulate and analyze results of teacher survey.
5. Include in Classroom Connection a reminder of upcoming open house.
6. Send minimum of three positive "good news" notes.
7. Begin record of written contacts.
8. Include a minimum of 15 minutes of cooperative learning activities in lesson plans for each class.
9. Implement at least one activity per week addressing students' multiple intelligences.
10. Begin teacher journal reflecting on success of cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
11. Have students reflect in journals on cooperative learning and/or multiple intelligence activities or other classroom activities.

Week 3

1. Continue contacting parents of RAP students.
2. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.

3. Continue collecting parent surveys and tabulating results.
4. Continue "good news" notes.
5. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
6. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
7. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
8. Continue reminder of open house on Classroom Connection.
9. Tabulate and analyze student surveys.
10. Develop weekly review note for students to fill out in RAP, take home, and return signed by parent.
11. Attempt phone contact to parents of students who have three or more missing assignments for the grading period.
12. Attempt phone contact to parents of students who have three or more late and/or incomplete assignments for the grading period.
13. During phone conversations remind parents of upcoming open house.
14. Begin planning homework seminar to be presented to parents and students to develop positive homework routines.

Week 4

1. Continue contacting parents of RAP students.
2. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
3. Continue collecting parent surveys and tabulating results.
4. Continue "good news" notes.
5. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
6. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
7. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
8. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.
9. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.

10. Continue reminder of open house on Classroom Connection.
11. In RAP, have students make invitations to open house and take home to parents.
12. Record number of parents at open house.
13. Continue planning homework seminar.

Week 5

1. Continue contacting parents of RAP students.
2. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
3. Continue "good news" notes.
4. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
5. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
6. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
7. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.
8. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.
9. Continue planning homework seminar.
10. Analyze parent survey results.
11. Start making at least one positive phone call home per week.
12. Begin weekly reward program for classes with 100% of completed assignments turned in on time.
13. Keep track of classes' eligibility for reward.
14. Attempt to make at least one positive comment for each progress report sent at mid-term.
15. Identify at least twenty at-risk students using low grades or missing/late/incomplete assignments as determining factors.
16. Begin contacting by phone the parents of the at-risk students, explaining the weekly math progress reports.

17. Keep record of phone contacts with these parents.

Week 6

1. Continue contacting parents of RAP students.
2. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
3. Continue "good news" notes and positive calls to parents.
4. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
5. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
6. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
7. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.
8. Continue keeping track of classes that qualify for reward because of 100% homework completion and rewarding those classes.
9. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.
10. Continue calling parents of identified at-risk students to explain weekly progress report and recording these contacts.
11. Begin sending home weekly math progress reports to identified at-risk students.
12. Begin documenting at-risk students' progress.
13. Send home invitation to homework seminar and mention the seminar on Classroom Connection.

Week 7

1. Continue contacting parents of RAP students.
2. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
3. Continue "good news" notes and positive calls to parents.
4. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
5. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
6. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
7. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.

8. Continue keeping track of classes that qualify for reward because of 100% homework completion and rewarding those classes.
9. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.
10. Continue documenting progress of identified at-risk students.
11. Continue sending home weekly math progress reports for at-risk students until a significant, consistent improvement is shown.
12. Present homework seminar.
13. Record number of parents and students who attended the seminar.

Week 8

1. Continue contacting parents of RAP students.
2. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
3. Continue "good news" notes and positive calls to parents.
4. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
5. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
6. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
7. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.
8. Continue keeping track of classes that qualify for reward because of 100% homework completion and rewarding those classes.
9. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.
10. Continue documenting progress of identified at-risk students.
11. Continue sending home weekly math progress reports for at-risk students until a significant, consistent improvement is shown.
12. Remind parents of upcoming conferences during Classroom Connection messages and phone calls with parents.

Week 9

1. Continue contacting parents of RAP students.
2. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
3. Continue "good news" notes and positive calls to parents.
4. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
5. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
6. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
7. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.
8. Continue keeping track of classes that qualify for reward because of 100% homework completion and rewarding those classes.
9. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.
10. Continue documenting progress of identified at-risk students.
11. Continue sending home weekly math progress reports for at-risk students until a significant, consistent improvement is shown.
12. Remind parents of upcoming conferences during Classroom Connection messages and phone contacts.
13. Have RAP students make reminders of conferences to take home to parents.

Week 10

1. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
2. Continue "good news" notes and positive calls to parents.
3. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
4. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
5. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
6. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.
7. Continue keeping track of classes that qualify for reward because of 100% homework completion and rewarding those classes.

8. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.
9. Continue documenting progress of identified at-risk students.
10. Continue sending home weekly math progress reports for at-risk students until a significant, consistent improvement is shown.
11. Remind parents of upcoming conferences during Classroom Connection messages and phone contacts.
12. Have RAP students create reminders for their parents about conferences.
13. Record number of parents who attended conferences.

Week 11

1. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
2. Continue "good news" notes and positive calls to parents.
3. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
4. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
5. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
6. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.
7. Continue keeping track of classes that qualify for reward because of 100% homework completion and rewarding those classes.
8. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.
9. Continue documenting progress of identified at-risk students.
10. Continue sending home weekly math progress reports for at-risk students until a significant, consistent improvement is shown.
11. Post in rooms a quarterly honor roll recognizing students who have completed 100% of their assignments on time.
12. Award certificates to students achieving this honor roll status.

Week 12

1. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
2. Continue "good news" notes and positive calls to parents.
3. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
4. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
5. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
6. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.
7. Continue keeping track of classes that qualify for reward because of 100% homework completion and rewarding those classes.
8. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.
9. Continue documenting progress of identified at-risk students.
10. Continue sending home weekly math progress reports for at-risk students until a significant, consistent improvement is shown.

Week 13

1. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
2. Continue "good news" notes and positive calls to parents.
3. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
4. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
5. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
6. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.
7. Continue keeping track of classes that qualify for reward because of 100% homework completion and rewarding those classes.
8. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.
9. Continue documenting progress of identified at-risk students.

10. Continue sending home weekly math progress reports for at-risk students until a significant, consistent improvement is shown.

11. Attempt to include at least one positive comment on each mid-term progress report that is sent.

12. Begin developing second parent and student surveys based on experiences during the first semester.

Week 14

1. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
2. Continue "good news" notes and positive calls to parents.
3. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
4. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
5. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
6. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.
7. Continue keeping track of classes that qualify for reward because of 100% homework completion and rewarding those classes.
8. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.
9. Continue documenting progress of identified at-risk students.
10. Continue sending home weekly math progress reports for at-risk students until a significant, consistent improvement is shown.
11. Continue development of second parent and student surveys.

Week 15

1. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
2. Continue "good news" notes and positive calls to parents.
3. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
4. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
5. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.

6. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.
7. Continue keeping track of classes that qualify for reward because of 100% homework completion and rewarding those classes.
8. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.
9. Continue documenting progress of identified at-risk students.
10. Continue sending home weekly math progress reports for at-risk students until a significant, consistent improvement is shown.
11. Continue developing parent and student surveys.

Week 16

1. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
2. Continue "good news" notes and positive calls to parents.
3. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
4. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
5. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
6. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.
7. Continue keeping track of classes that qualify for reward because of 100% homework completion and rewarding those classes.
8. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.
9. Continue documenting progress of identified at-risk students.
10. Continue sending home weekly math progress reports for at-risk students until a significant, consistent improvement is shown.

Week 17

1. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
2. Continue "good news" notes and positive calls to parents.
3. Continue recording written and phone contacts.

4. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
5. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
6. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.
7. Continue keeping track of classes that qualify for reward because of 100% homework completion and rewarding those classes.
8. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.
9. Continue documenting progress of identified at-risk students.
10. Continue sending home weekly math progress reports for at-risk students until a significant, consistent improvement is shown.
11. Send home second parent surveys and tabulate results as they are returned.

Week 18

1. Continue noting assignments with parent signatures.
2. Continue "good news" notes and positive calls to parents.
3. Continue recording written and phone contacts.
4. Continue cooperative learning and multiple intelligence activities.
5. Continue teacher and student reflections in journals.
6. Continue weekly review notes from students to parents.
7. Continue keeping track of classes that qualify for reward because of 100% homework completion and rewarding those classes.
8. Continue attempting phone contacts to parents of students with three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments for the quarter.
9. Continue documenting progress of identified at-risk students.
10. Continue sending home weekly math progress reports for at-risk students until a significant, consistent improvement is shown.
11. Continue collecting and tabulating parent surveys.
12. Give second student survey and collect during that class period.

13. Tabulate results of student survey.

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, surveys for students, parents, and teachers were developed. The student surveys addressed study habits and attitudes towards schoolwork. The parent surveys addressed parent involvement in their children's education. The survey for teachers dealt with the importance of homework in their classes and the problem of lack of commitment on the part of the students. In addition, teachers kept records of grades, parental responses to written communications, and observations of the effectiveness of classroom strategies and management techniques. Students kept journals reflecting on their growth as mathematics students.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of the project was to improve student learning by increasing the commitment of students to their schoolwork. The action plan targeted the students in eight mathematics classes, four classes in seventh grade and four in eighth grade, during the first semester of the 1997-1998 school year. In reviewing the available literature, the researchers concluded that education is the shared responsibility of teachers, parents, and students; therefore, the project involved a three-pronged approach. Although classroom teachers devised and implemented the action plan, they targeted behaviors in all three groups.

Teachers consciously communicated on a regular basis with parents, using a variety of methods. Written communication included chapter newsletters, good news notes, progress reports, and parent appreciation certificates. The chapter newsletters, sent home just before students began a chapter, previewed the subject matter, outlined chapter objectives, listed any special supplies students would need, and suggested specific ways parents could aid their children's learning. Good news notes singled out students' accomplishments. Mid-term progress reports kept parents informed of students' academic progress. Teachers acknowledged parental participation by distributing parent appreciation certificates to those parents who became involved in the action plan.

As soon as a student's grades and learning were threatened by missing, late, or incomplete assignments, teachers established a phone contact with the parents.

Additionally, through purposeful written and phone contacts, teachers encouraged parents to attend school for open house, conferences, student performances, and classroom visitations. Furthermore, teachers surveyed their professional colleagues to document the extent of the problem of the lack of student commitment to schoolwork and to learn how other teachers dealt with the problem (Appendix D).

From the very beginning of the action plan, parents were encouraged to take an active role in their children's education. Parents were asked to sign their children's completed homework assignments on a daily basis. Parents also were urged to fill out parent surveys at the beginning and end of the semester. Questions on the surveys elicited responses concerning parent attitudes about and involvement in their children's school life. Furthermore, parents received numerous notices of opportunities to visit school and written advice on how to help their children learn.

Teachers used a variety of methods to increase student participation in and responsibility for their own learning. Students were surveyed at the beginning and end of the semester concerning their study habits, their learning strategies, their opinion of themselves as learners, and their commitment to schoolwork. Additionally, students reflected on these topics in their journals. In an attempt to motivate more students, especially those who had not responded to more traditional methods, teachers changed their curriculum to include more lessons involving cooperative learning and addressing multiple intelligences. On a quarterly basis, students who completed 100% of their homework on time received certificates and recognition in the classroom. Each class had an added incentive of a tangible reward offered if the entire class completed 100% of homework on time for a full week.

During the first three weeks of the action plan, teachers, parents, and students completed surveys. Teachers established phone and written communications with parents and introduced lessons in cooperative learning and multiple intelligences. Both

teachers and students began their reflective journals, and teachers established their record keeping procedures.

During weeks three through nine, whenever students had three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments, teachers attempted to contact the parents by phone. Other parental contacts informed parents of open house and of an upcoming homework seminar. Throughout this portion of the action plan, teachers also continued the strategies begun in weeks one through three.

At midterm, approximately at the fifth week, every student's parents received a progress report. At the same time, teachers began the positive weekly phone calls home and started sending good news notes. They also identified a number of at-risk students, using low grades or missing, late, and incomplete assignments as determining factors. Teachers telephoned parents of these at-risk students to explain the weekly math progress reports that would follow.

At the end of the quarter, teachers held conferences available to the parents of all students. They prepared a quarterly honor roll based on 100% timely completion of homework and filled out student certificates to be awarded the following week.

During the tenth through sixteenth weeks of the action plan, teachers continued their emphasis on contacting parents, implementing cooperative learning lessons, addressing multiple intelligences, and writing in journals. The practice of having parents sign daily homework was discontinued due to a noticeable lack of interest by most parents. Those parents who had consistently signed their children's homework papers were awarded certificates of appreciation. The identified at-risk students continued to receive a weekly progress report which was to be signed by parents and returned. Teachers continued to make contacts with parents of any students who had three or more missing, late, or incomplete assignments. Once again at midterm, all parents received a report of their children's progress. The eighth grade teacher

participated in the Homework Help Parent Conference where parents received packets of study tips (Appendix BB).

In the last two weeks of the action plan, parents and students again responded to surveys, which included questions directly related to specific aspects of the action plan. The results were tabulated. Following the completion of the action plan, qualifying students again received certificates for 100% on-time completion of homework.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effect of the action plan on parental involvement in their children's education, parent surveys were given at the beginning and end of the plan. It should be noted that 85 parents of seventh graders responded to the first survey and only 50 to the second. In the eighth grade, the numbers were 96 and 42, respectively.

In the seventh grade, the percentage of parents who asked to see their children's assignment notebooks frequently or on a daily basis decreased from 81.2% to 44.0%. Similarly, at the eighth grade level, the percentage of parents who checked assignment notebooks with the same frequency decreased from 50.0% to 31.0%. The percentage of seventh grade parents who checked with the same frequency to see if homework had been completed decreased from 88.2% to 78.0%. At the eighth grade level, the percentages decreased from 78.1% to 69.0%.

In addition, as the implementation continued, the percentage of seventh grade parents who helped their children with homework frequently or on a daily basis decreased from 51.8% to 38.0%. The corresponding percentages at the eighth grade level were 40.6% and 31.0%, respectively.

Data collected from the second parent survey indicated that 78.0% of seventh grade parents and 54.8% of eighth grade parents felt that the chapter newsletters increased the parents' ability to help their children in mathematics. Similarly, 96.0% of seventh grade parents and 90.5% of eighth grade parents stated that mid-term reports were at least somewhat helpful.

Interestingly, 76.0% of seventh grade parents and 57.1% of eighth grade parents said that communication between teacher and parent was extremely important as students reached the middle level. Although every household should have received a minimum of five written communications in the form of chapter newsletters, 88.0% of seventh grade parents and 88.1% of eighth grade parents reported that they had had three or fewer contacts with their child's mathematics teacher during the action plan.

A student survey was administered to 111 seventh graders and 117 eighth graders at the beginning and to 109 seventh graders and 108 eighth graders at the end of the action plan in order to measure students' perception of their own involvement in their learning. The total number of students surveyed changed due to transfers in and out of the classes. According to the student responses on the second survey, 68.8% of seventh graders and 75.9% of eighth graders felt that cooperative lesson activities helped at least somewhat in their understanding of mathematics this year. In fact, a little over 25% of the students surveyed responded that these cooperative activities helped their understanding "a lot."

Another meaningful finding from this survey, related to the use of the student journals, showed a different perception at the two grade levels. In the seventh grade, 30.3% found the journal writing helpful while 23.9% disliked the writing. In contrast, only 13.0% of eighth graders found the journal writing helpful while almost half of these eighth grade students disliked the activity.

In examining survey questions related to difficulty of mathematics work and students' understanding of math, some important findings must be noted. Table 6 shows that at the seventh grade level, 46.8% of the students surveyed answered that the mathematics material this year was more difficult than what was covered last year. As shown in Table 7, in spite of this perceived difficulty, 66.1% of these same students responded that they understood mathematics better this year than they had last year. Even more relevantly, 45.4% of the eighth graders surveyed indicated that they

understood better this year in spite of the fact that over 75% of these students felt the material was more difficult this year. Student responses to questions regarding cooperative learning and their understanding of the material suggested that the objective of increased student learning had been achieved.

Table 6

Students' Responses Regarding the Relative Difficulty of Mathematics Material in 1997-1998 as Compared to 1996-1997

Grade	Less difficult		The same		More difficult		Much more difficult	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	no.	%
Seventh	25	22.9	33	30.3	46	42.2	5	4.6
Eighth	4	3.7	22	20.4	64	59.3	18	16.7

Table 7

Students' Ratings of Their Understanding of Mathematics in 1997-1998 as Compared to 1996-1997

Grade	Much worse		Worse		The same		Better		Much better	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Seventh	2	1.8	8	7.3	26	23.9	46	42.2	26	23.9
Eighth	7	6.5	20	18.5	31	28.7	44	40.7	5	4.6

The final relevant piece of information obtained from the second student survey showed that, by the end of the intervention, 88.1% of the seventh graders and 76.9% of the eighth graders rated themselves as average or above average mathematics students. Figure 1 displays both seventh and eighth graders' perceptions of themselves as mathematics students at the end of the action plan. A comparison of responses to this survey question before and after the intervention showed a 17% increase in the number of seventh grade students viewing themselves as good or excellent mathematics students. At the eighth grade level, there was no change in the same categories. Considering that over 75% of these eighth grade students rated the

material as more difficult than that of the previous year, this continued self-confidence was encouraging.

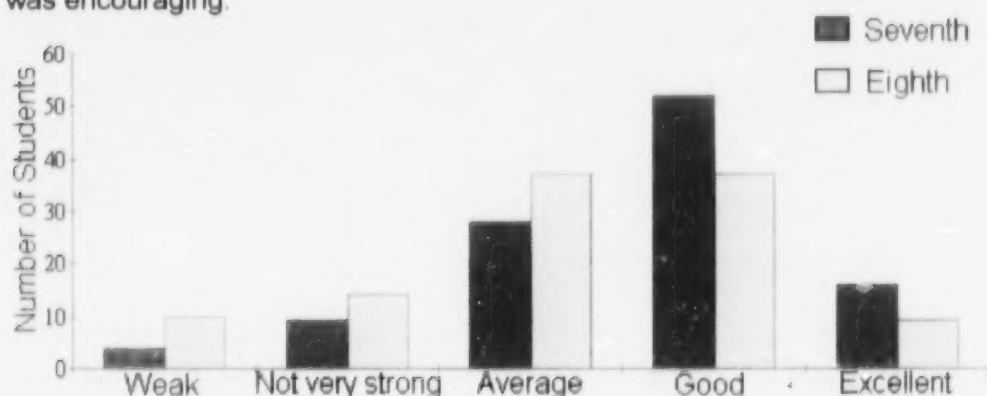


Figure 1. Students' post-intervention perceptions of themselves as mathematics students.

Increased communication between teachers and parents was a significant objective of the semester-long action plan. During the first semester of the 1997-1998 school year, the seventh grade teacher made 84 phone contacts with parents as compared to 68 such calls made during the entire 1996-1997 school year. Similarly, the eighth grade teacher increased phone contacts from 44 calls during the 1996-1997 year to 60 phone contacts during the semester of the action plan. The two teachers sent a total of 51 good news notes to parents whose children either showed improvement, displayed a consistently positive attitude and effort, or performed exceptionally well on a single activity. In addition, parents of 24 students received certificates of appreciation for consistently signing their children's homework papers during the first quarter.

During the first semester of the 1997-1998 year, teachers reported that a higher percentage of parents attended school functions. Teachers reported higher attendance figures for both open house and traditional conferences during this year than in previous years. A greater number of seventh grade parents requested team conferences scheduled during the team's conference and planning period. A number of these conference requests did not reflect any problem being experienced by the child

but rather a desire by the parents to have more information about their children's progress.

During the implementation period, the seventh and eighth grade mathematics teachers sent progress reports at midterm of each quarter to parents of all seventh and eighth grade students. In previous years, these teachers had sent such interim reports only to parents of students whose grades were in jeopardy or who were achieving at a very high level. Parents found this extra effort by teachers to be helpful as the parents related during parent-teacher conferences and in their responses on the second parent survey.

Table 8

Comparison of Missing, Late/Incomplete, and Complete Assignments Between the Targeted Classes of 1997-1998 Second Quarter and Comparable Classes From 1996-1997 Fourth Quarter

Class	Missing		Late/Incomplete		Complete		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	Assignments
Seventh 1996-97	104	3.2	280	8.6	2872	88.2	3256
Targeted Seventh	58	2.4	184	7.7	2149	89.9	2391
Eighth 1996-97	701	25.1	46	1.6	2046	73.3	2793
Targeted Eighth	443	13.2	110	3.3	2795	83.5	3348

In order to evaluate the impact of certain aspects of the action plan on completion of students' assignments, the numbers of missing, late/incomplete, and complete assignments were tabulated from teachers' records for the targeted classes during the second quarter of the 1997-1998 school year (Appendix CC). In an attempt to put these data into perspective, teachers used records from comparable classes during the fourth quarter of the previous year. Table 8 shows the results for both grade levels for both

years. Although there was no major difference between the seventh grade numbers for the two years, the percentage of missing assignments in the targeted eighth grade classes was almost 12% below that of the previous year's eighth graders.

In order to evaluate the impact of the action plan on student achievement in mathematics, second quarter report card grades were compared to first quarter grades (Appendix DD). The first quarter grades reflected only a few weeks of the action plan whereas the second quarter grades fell at the end of the action plan. Only students who were enrolled for the entire implementation period were included in the comparison.

Of note, among the 105 seventh graders and 101 eighth graders enrolled for the entire intervention, none dropped two or more letter grades from the first quarter to the second. As shown in Figure 2, about half of the students in each grade maintained the same letter grade for the second quarter. In the seventh grade, 41.0% raised their achievement by one or more grades; in the eighth grade, 29.7% had a similar improvement in achievement.

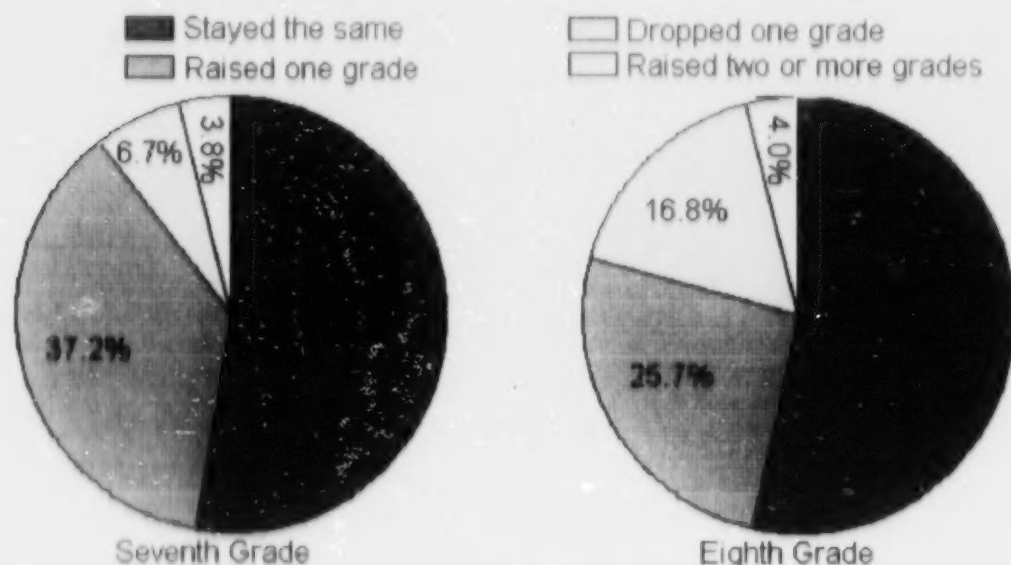


Figure 2. Comparing second quarter grades to grades for the same students first quarter.

An extra intervention of sending weekly reports on math progress was used with identified at-risk students with the goal of improving their homework completion rate and increasing their achievement level. However, in spite of sending 132 weekly reports to the parents of 12 at-risk seventh graders and 58 reports to the parents of 20 eighth graders, teachers reported no meaningful improvement in the achievement of those students. Only two seventh grade students of the twelve showed a marked improvement; any improvement by the remaining ten was minimal. In fact, two students had grade averages drop by over 20% during the implementation period.

The seventh grade teacher reported that only 65.2% of the 132 weekly reports to parents were returned signed as requested. In fact, phone calls to homes of five of these seventh grade at-risk students revealed that the child had told the parents that the activity had been discontinued by the teacher within three weeks of the initial contact.

The eighth grade teacher reported that only 22 of 58 weekly reports or 37.9% were returned signed. Likewise, eighth grade students showed no marked improvement in achievement.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Analyzing the various data from the action plan would seem to suggest that portions of the plan were successful and others were not. For example, students' perceptions of their ability in and understanding of mathematics seemed to improve. Some students improved their achievement, and most at least maintained the same achievement level. More parents had more contacts with teachers during the implementation period. On the negative side, parents' daily involvement in checking assignment notebooks and helping children with homework decreased. Furthermore, the plan had little effect on completion of homework. The targeted at-risk students seemed to benefit very little, if at all, from the extra intervention of weekly reports.

The researchers concede that students' positive perceptions of their mathematical ability and understanding may be due in part to factors other than the effects of the implementation plan. For example, when the seventh graders responded to the first survey, they could have been apprehensive about success in general at the middle level. By the end of the first semester, most seventh graders are more comfortable with middle school and more confident of their ability to succeed.

Certain aspects of the action plan, such as cooperative learning lessons, lessons addressing multiple intelligences, and increased contacts with parents, especially of a positive nature, undoubtedly increased student achievement. However, other contributing factors could have been the increased maturity level of the students from the beginning to the end of the semester, the content of specific chapters, and the increased familiarity of students with the teachers' expectations and classroom procedures.

The extra parental contacts, including phone calls, good news notes, student-made invitations to open house and conferences, and chapter newsletters undoubtedly affected attendance at open house and conferences. However, other contributing factors could have included increased political emphasis on education issues, more concerned parents, and good weather conditions.

Because the parent surveys were anonymous, the researchers could not determine which parents decreased their daily involvement in their children's learning. Perhaps some parents lessened their involvement because of the high achievement level of their children or because they wanted their children to accept responsibility for their own learning. In fact, comments on some surveys indicated that parents felt their children were successful on their own.

Overall, the plan had little effect on the percentage of completed homework. As any seasoned teacher will admit, some students will not respond to any intervention which requires completing homework. The success of the weekly reports depended on

parental responsibility. In a number of cases, parents did not participate as fully as the teachers had hoped. Since most written communication relied on the children being responsible for delivery, some weekly progress reports did not get home.

Certain aspects of the implementation plan will be used in future years. The teachers involved in the action plan endorse a continued emphasis on cooperative learning, journal writing, and lessons designed to accommodate multiple intelligences. In addition, they will also continue to recognize with certificates students who have completed 100% of their homework. The good news notes and positive phone calls improved relationships between school and home. Early intervention in the form of a phone call when students missed three assignments often stopped small problems from becoming big ones. These teachers will continue to send each student's family a mid-term progress report. The good will generated by these phone calls and interim reports was well worth the extra effort.

A number of aspects of the implementation plan will be dropped. Asking parents to sign homework was not beneficial. Within a few weeks, participation dwindled to a halt. The weekly report cards for at-risk students proved to be pointless. While a number of parents found the chapter newsletters to be informative, many families either didn't receive them or did not take advantage of them. Perhaps if these newsletters had been mailed home, more parents would have benefited. The Homework Help Parent Conference will not be repeated. Less than half of the families who were invited participated with no significant improvement noticed in student effort or achievement. Even when teachers sent conference packets to families unable to attend, the teachers received no response.

In summary, some students and their families benefited from this intervention plan, if not in increased student achievement, at least in increased good will between school and home. Although the goal of the intervention was that the responsibility for student learning would be shared by teachers, parents, and students, the majority of the effort

was made by the teachers. Parents and students frequently did not become actively involved to the extent that teachers anticipated. Teachers need to continue the search for ways to motivate students and parents to become active participants in education.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A
 Seventh Grade Missing, Late, Incomplete Assignments
 Fourth Quarter of 1996 - 1997 School Year

Class 1 - 28 students X 25 assignments = 700 total assignments
 9 missing 43 late or incomplete

Class 2 - 25 students X 25 assignments = 625 total assignments
 15 missing 40 late or incomplete

Class 3 - 31 students X 26 assignments = 806 total assignments
 56 missing 113 late or incomplete

Class 4 - 25 students X 26 assignments = 650 total assignments
 9 missing 66 late or incomplete

Class 5 - 25 students X 19 students = 475 total assignments
 15 missing 18 late or missing

All 5 classes - total = 3256 assignments
 104 missing 280 late or incomplete

28 students had 20% or more of assignments missing. Their quarter grades:
 B-2 C-8 D-6 F-12

26 students had D or F - 12 with a D and 14 with an F
 Grade of D - 5 had less than 20% missing, late, or incomplete assignments
 6 had 20 - 40 % missing, late, or incomplete assignments
 1 had more than 40 % missing, late, or incomplete assignments

Grade of F - 2 had less than 20% missing, late, or incomplete assignments
 6 had 20 - 40 % missing, late, or incomplete assignments
 6 had more than 40 % missing, late, or incomplete assignments

Appendix B
Eighth Grade Missing, Late, Incomplete Assignments
Fourth Quarter of the 1996 - 1997 School Year

Class 1 - 29 students X 21 assignments = 609 total assignments
151 missing 18 late or incomplete

Class 2 - 25 students X 21 assignments = 525 total assignments
126 missing 5 late or incomplete

Class 3 - 28 students X 21 assignments = 588 total assignments
103 missing 8 late or incomplete

Class 4 - 24 students X 21 assignments = 504 total assignments
157 missing 10 late or incomplete

Class 5 - 27 students X 21 assignments = 567 total assignments
164 missing 5 late or incomplete

All 5 classes - 133 students X 21 assignments = 2793 total assignments
701 missing 46 late or incomplete

Appendix C
Sample of Teacher Survey, August 1997

Teacher Survey

As we begin a new school year, I am looking for teacher input for my graduate class. I would appreciate your answering these questions and returning the survey to me by Friday, August 29. Thank you in advance for your participation.

1. How often do you assign homework?

Never Seldom Sometimes Often Every day

Comments:

2. Homework represents what percent of the total grade in your class?

Less than 25% 26-50% 51-75% More than 75%

Comments:

3. Do you accept late assignments?

Yes

No

Comments:

4. Is there a penalty for late work?

Yes

No

Comments:

5. How often do you ask a student to stay after school to make up a late or missing assignment?

Never

Sometimes

Frequently

Comments:

6. How much of a problem is missing/late/incomplete work in your classes?

Not at all Minor problem Moderate problem Major problem

Comments:

7. Do you typically allow some class time to begin homework?

Yes No

Comments:

8. Do you encourage parents to help students complete their homework?

Yes No

Comments:

9. Approximately how many parent contacts do you make in a week (phone, written, conference, weekly grade sheets, assignment notebooks, etc.)?

0 1-5 More than 5

Comments:

10. When you initiate a parent contact, how many attempts will you make?

1 2-3 More than 5

Comments:

Appendix D Summary of Teacher Survey Responses - August, 1997

The numbers show how many teachers from each of 3 schools responded in each category. There were 29 teachers responding from the target school, 28 teachers from the second school and 22 teachers from the third school. Some totals differ from these because some teachers chose not to answer some questions.

1. How often do you assign homework?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Every Day
Target School	1	4	4	16	4
School #2	0	4	9	8	7
School #3	1	6	1	11	3
Total	2	14	14	35	14

Comments:

Weekly, on average.

About once per week, however more assignments are completed in class.

Normally worksheets at the end of the chapter.

2. Homework represents what percent of the total grade in your class?

	Less than 25%	25 - 50 %	51-75 %	More than 75%
Target School	11	15	3	0
School #2	11	10	3	2
School #3	8	10	2	2
Total	30	35	8	4

Comments:

3. Do you accept late assignments?

	Yes	No
Target School	24	3
School #2	24	4
School #3	18	2
Total	66	9

Comments:

After 2 days - zero.

For a lower grade.

In first semester for daily work.

Late work is to be turned in by class time the following day.

Not daily work but for labs and projects with the grades going down daily.

4. Is there a penalty for late work?

	Yes	No	Does not Apply
Target School	27	0	2
School #2	19	2	4
School #3	17	1	0
Total	63	3	6

Comments:

Sometimes on a major project, otherwise no.

10 points per day.

About 5 pts off per day late.

But not severe - I'd rather have them turn it in.

Projects (major grades) - reduce by 1 grade for each day late.

Drop of 1 letter grade for late work without valid excuse.

5. How often do you ask a student to stay after school to make up a late or missing assignment?

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently
Target School	6	18	4
School #2	7	19	2
School #3	3	14	4
Total	16	51	10

Comments:

If the student does not have the assignment the following day, he is required to come in after school to complete the assignment.

To inform student they need to make up work.

6. How much of a problem is missing/late work in your classes?

	Not at all	Minor problem	Moderate problem	Major problem
Target School	2	11	11	5
School #2	0	6	14	7
School #3	1	4	8	9
Total	3	21	33	21

Comments:

It is related directly to the attitude of the student. Some never miss and others never respond.

It depends on the year.

Same students throughout the year.

7. Do you typically allow some class time to begin homework?

	Yes	No
Target School	25	3
School #2	23	4
School #3	14	4
Total	62	11

Comments:

At times.

It really depends on the type of assignment.

Should be more.

8. Do you encourage parents to help students complete their homework?

	Yes	No
Target School	20	7
School #2	23	5
School #3	16	4
Total	59	16

Comments:

Not on daily work unless having difficulty. With extra credit, projects, everything else, yes.

Not that one can stop this.

That's fine if the student does over 50%.

Any contact is good.

9. Approximately how many parent contacts do you make in a week (phone, written, conference, weekly grade sheets, assignment notebooks, etc.)?

	0	1 - 5	More than 5
Target School	0	20	9
School #2	1	24	3
School #3	1	12	3
Total	2	56	15

Comments:

10. When you initiate a parent phone contact, how many attempts will you make?

	1	2 - 3	More than 3
Target School	3	23	3
School #2	2	20	6
School #3	1	16	5
Total	6	59	14

Comments:

Whatever is necessary.

Appendix E
Summary of Phone Contacts for 1996 - 1997 School Year

During the 1996-97 school year the seventh grade teacher made 68 phone calls to families of math students. Eight of these were about discipline issues. The remaining 60 calls dealt with only academic issues; 45 (75%) of these calls had missing, late, or incomplete homework mentioned in the conversation.

The eighth grade teacher made a total of 44 calls, all dealing with academic issues. Eight of these calls also dealt with discipline issues. Of these 44 calls, 22 (50%) included concerns about late, missing, or incomplete homework.

Appendix F
Summary of Progress Reports' Comments Fourth Quarter 1997

This represents 4th quarter of the 1996-97 school year. There were 134 students in the five 7th grade math classes with 36 students receiving negative mid-term progress reports. With 123 eighth grade math students, 51 such reports were sent. The following table shows the number of these reports with 5 of the most common remarks.

Class	Missing Homework	Capable of Better Work	Fails to Seek Extra Help	Discipline Problem	Fails Quizzes and Tests
7th (36 students)	20	11	25	1	33
7th	55.6%	30.6%	69.4%	2.8%	91.7%
8th (51 students)	26	8	13	0	13
8th	51.0%	15.7%	25.5%	0.0%	25.5%

Appendix G
Sample of First Student Survey, August, 1997

Student Survey

As we begin a new year, I am interested in your answers to the following questions. Use your experiences from last year. Please circle your response. Do not put your name on the survey.

1. How often do you ask for help outside of class?
Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day
2. How often do you participate in class?
Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day
3. How often do you ask questions when you do not understand?
Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day
4. How much time do you spend on homework on an average day?
None 30 min. 1 hour 2 hours More than 2 hours
5. How often do you call Classroom Connection?
Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day
6. How often does your homework suffer because of other activities?
Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Always
7. How often do you turn in your homework?
Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Always
8. How often do you ask your parents for help with your homework?
Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Always
9. How often do your parents ask you about your school day?
Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day
10. How often do you read for pleasure?
Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Always
11. How concerned are your parents about your grades?
Not at all Very little Somewhat Very much Extremely
12. How would you rate yourself as a math student?
Weak Not very strong Average Good Excellent

Appendix H
Summary of Responses to First Student Survey - August, 1997

There were 111 seventh grade students and 117 eighth graders responding. Some questions have fewer answers because not all students responded to all questions.

1. How often do you ask for help outside of class?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	2	6	14	5	0
7th - #2	0	5	13	8	1
7th - #3	0	5	18	3	2
7th - #4	2	6	15	6	0
7th - Total	4	22	60	22	3
8th - #1	2	9	10	7	0
8th - #2	5	9	9	8	0
8th - #3	1	8	17	3	0
8th - #4	2	11	13	2	0
8th - Total	10	37	49	20	0

2. How often do you participate in class?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	0	0	9	7	11
7th - #2	0	2	9	9	7
7th - #3	1	4	3	10	10
7th - #4	1	2	8	13	5
7th - Total	2	8	29	39	33
8th - #1	0	1	10	9	9
8th - #2	0	1	15	14	1
8th - #3	0	0	12	13	4
8th - #4	0	1	11	10	6
8th - Total	0	3	48	46	20

3. How often do you ask questions when you do not understand?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	0	2	6	9	8
7th - #2	0	0	10	10	6
7th - #3	1	3	12	9	3
7th - #4	0	1	11	10	7
7th - Total	1	6	39	38	24
8th - #1	0	2	7	15	3
8th - #2	0	3	14	12	2
8th - #3	1	3	12	12	1
8th - #4	1	4	9	11	3
8th - Total	2	12	42	50	9

4. How much time do you spend on homework on an average day?

	None	30 min.	1 hour	2 hours	> 2 hours
7th - #1	0	5	16	6	0
7th - #2	1	7	15	2	1
7th - #3	0	11	11	2	4
7th - #4	0	3	21	5	0
7th - Total	1	26	63	15	5
8th - #1	0	5	9	11	3
8th - #2	1	3	12	12	3
8th - #3	0	6	8	13	2
8th - #4	1	3	19	4	1
8th - Total	2	17	48	40	9

5. How often do you call Classroom Connection?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	11	8	7	1	0
7th - #2	14	5	6	1	1
7th - #3	9	9	8	1	1
7th - #4	9	9	7	4	0
7th - Total	43	31	28	7	2
8th - #1	7	11	7	2	1
8th - #2	12	11	8	0	0
8th - #3	9	12	8	0	0
8th - #4	7	12	8	1	0
8th - Total	35	46	31	3	1

6. How often does your homework suffer because of other activities?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	7	11	5	4	0
7th - #2	4	14	8	1	0
7th - #3	5	11	10	2	0
7th - #4	3	12	10	3	0
7th - Total	19	48	33	10	0
8th - #1	4	9	8	6	0
8th - #2	8	11	8	3	1
8th - #3	6	9	10	4	1
8th - #4	6	8	13	1	0
8th - Total	24	37	39	14	2

7. How often do you turn in your homework?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	0	0	0	7	20
7th - #2	0	0	0	7	20
7th - #3	0	1	4	11	12
7th - #4	0	0	1	6	22
7th - Total	0	1	5	31	74
8th - #1	0	1	1	7	19
8th - #2	0	1	1	12	17
8th - #3	0	0	3	6	19
8th - #4	0	1	1	9	17
8th - Total	0	3	6	34	72

8. How often do you ask your parents for help with your homework?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	1	4	8	8	6
7th - #2	0	3	13	9	2
7th - #3	0	2	11	9	6
7th - #4	0	4	10	7	8
7th - Total	1	13	42	33	22
8th - #1	1	5	6	10	6
8th - #2	1	6	11	9	4
8th - #3	0	4	15	8	2
8th - #4	2	7	8	10	1
8th - Total	4	22	40	37	13

9. How often do your parents ask you about your school day?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	0	0	2	5	20
7th - #2	1	2	3	5	17
7th - #3	0	3	4	6	13
7th - #4	0	0	2	4	22
7th - Total	1	5	11	20	72
8th - #1	0	3	4	5	15
8th - #2	2	4	3	7	15
8th - #3	0	1	7	6	14
8th - #4	0	2	6	7	13
8th - Total	2	10	20	25	57

10. How often do you read for pleasure?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	0	3	12	9	3
7th - #2	1	4	11	7	4
7th - #3	4	6	10	4	4
7th - #4	1	7	10	6	5
7th - Total	6	20	43	26	16
8th - #1	3	5	9	8	3
8th - #2	5	4	15	6	1
8th - #3	3	7	7	8	4
8th - #4	6	4	6	9	3
8th - Total	17	20	37	31	11

11. How concerned are your parents about your grades?

	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Very much	Extremely
7th - #1	0	0	0	12	15
7th - #2	0	0	0	8	18
7th - #3	0	2	3	7	15
7th - #4	0	1	2	10	15
7th - Total	0	3	5	37	63
8th - #1	0	0	2	9	18
8th - #2	1	0	0	12	18
8th - #3	0	0	3	13	13
8th - #4	0	0	3	11	14
8th - Total	1	0	8	45	63

12. How would you rate yourself as a math student?

	Weak	Not very strong	Average	Good	Excellent
7th - #1	0	3	13	10	1
7th - #2	1	2	12	9	3
7th - #3	1	5	9	12	1
7th - #4	0	4	11	10	4
7th - Total	2	14	45	41	9
8th - #1	0	2	15	6	5
8th - #2	2	3	14	11	1
8th - #3	1	7	10	9	2
8th - #4	2	3	7	12	4
8th - Total	5	15	46	38	12

Appendix I
Sample of First Parent Survey - September, 1997

PARENT SURVEY

As we begin a new year, I would appreciate input on how you view your involvement in your child's education. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey and return it to school as soon as possible. I welcome any additional comments you may wish to make. Thank you in advance for your time.

1. How often do you ask your child about his/her day?

Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day

Comments:

2. How often do you call Classroom Connection?

Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day

Comments:

3. How often do you check your child's assignment notebook?

Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day

Comments:

4. How often do you check to see if your child's homework is complete?

Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day

Comments:

5. How often do you help your child with homework?

Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day

Comments:

6. If your child asks for help with a math problem, which would you be more likely to do?

- A. Do it yourself.
- B. Encourage your child to keep trying on his/her own.
- C. Work it out together.

Comments:

7. How often does your child see you read for pleasure or information?

Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day

Comments:

8. How often do you relate good experiences about your school days to your child?

Never Sometimes Frequently

Comments:

9. How often do you relate unhappy experiences about your school days to your child?

Never Sometimes Frequently

Comments:

10. Do you feel welcome when you visit or contact your child's school?

Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day

Comments:

Appendix J
Summary of Responses to First Parent Survey - September, 1997

Tables show number of people who responded in each category out of 85 seventh grade and 96 eighth grade surveys that were returned. The totals in any category may not equal the total number of surveys because of questions not answered or having more than one answer.

1. How often do you ask your child about his/her day?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th grade parent	0	0	1	12	72
8th grade parent	0	1	3	16	76

Comments: We sit down daily with our 3 children and review their day - highlights, disappointments, etc.

Child always loved school.

Very seldom get a response, but I keep trying.

2. How often do you call Classroom Connection?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th grade parent	28	10	33	9	1
8th grade parent	19	32	32	9	2

Comments: New to district. (5) Often not up to date. (7)

No phone. (2) Don't know about it. (2)

Never had a reason to. Probably will now. (3)

It's child's responsibility. Not beneficial.

It's a real help.

3. How often do you check your child's assignment notebook?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th grade parent	1	3	12	30	39
8th grade parent	7	13	28	27	21

Comments: Assignments aren't always there, but we checked daily.

Never had one, but asked daily.

If grades were poor.

Child responsible on own. (2)

Like a lot of information there.

Haven't had one, but will check it now.

Too much checking shows lack of trust.

4. How often do you check to see if your child's homework is complete?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th grade parent	0	2	8	28	47
8th grade parent	1	6	14	29	46

Comments: Only when child wants. Child is responsible.
 We ask more than check. (3) Must complete before homework
 Sometimes don't know until after it is done. Trust him.

5. How often do you help your child with homework?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th grade parent	0	4	37	29	15
8th grade parent	1	7	48	30	9

Comments: Child has hard time with school. Whenever asked. (12)
 I sometimes confuse them. Rarely asks. (3)
 Math series is difficult. Sometimes need to review.
 Never heard of some of these math things.

6. If your child asks for help with a math problem, which would you be more likely to do?

	Do it yourself	Encourage your child to keep trying on his/her own	Work it out together
7th grade parent	0	16	69
8th grade parent	1	18	77

Comments: Do both B and C. (3) Help find examples. (5)
 Math hard for me. (6) Work separately and compare. (3)
 Hard to work with own child. Try to explain without giving answer. (2)

7. How often does your child see you read for pleasure or information?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th grade parent	0	4	14	35	32
8th grade parent	1	6	21	24	44

Comments: Mostly newspapers or magazines. Both parents read daily.
 Hectic family - he reads, I do TV.

8. How often do you relate good experiences about your school days to your child?

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently
7th grade parent	2	55	5
8th grade parent	6	68	22

Comments: I'm a teacher - use present experiences, too.
 Easier to talk to children now that they are older.

9. How often do you relate unhappy experiences about your school days to your child?

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently
7th grade parent	20	57	6
8th grade parent	40	56	0

Comments: When using it to solve a problem.

If it relates to topic.

Used as examples of not to sweat small stuff.

More nervous than unhappy.

Really never had unhappy experience. (2)

Don't want to discourage him.

Talked about so child knows things happen and hope child can deal with bad experience in a positive way.

10. Do you feel welcome when you visit or contact your child's school?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
7th grade parent	0	2	23	17	36
8th grade parent	4	8	26	27	28

Comments: So far - helpful. (3)

New here. (10)

Different from grade school. (2)

Like all schools.

Office staff not friendly. (5)

Assistant principal helpful

Administration is unavailable.

Hard to say - only come for special events.

Lockers and hallways need to be more accessible.

Some teachers are helpful.

Enjoy conferences and meeting teachers.

Found most teachers here uncaring and aloof.

Elementary and high school - feel welcome, here - seldom.

Appendix K
Sample of Weekly Review Note

THE GAZETTE

UPCOMING EVENTS

ENGLISH

QUIZ CORNER

MATH

HISTORY

**INDUSTRIAL SCIENCE
TECH**

**PARENT
SIGNATURE**

**QUOTE OF THE
WEEK**

Appendix L
Sample of Seventh Grade Chapter Newsletter

September 17, 1997

Dear Parent or Guardian,

A big thank you to everyone who completed the survey sent with the first chapter newsletter. It was fantastic that over 75% of the surveys were returned. I have found your input very informative. Your children should also be commended for the responsibility they showed in taking the newsletter home and returning the completed surveys. It has been encouraging to see the number of homework papers that have been signed by a parent. Thank you for taking the time to do this. I hope this has helped you to feel more informed and more a part of the educational process.

This week we will be completing Chapter 1 with the test Friday. Monday, when the students look at the graded test, they will have the opportunity to do an estimated grade average for the first quarter. This is something we do the day after every chapter test to help the students be aware of their progress. Your child has probably shared with you my special policy about tests and quizzes. Any time students have a D or F on a quiz or test, they may attempt a retake sometime within the following week. This is voluntary and is to be done before or after school.

Next week we will leave the textbook for some work with the Illinois road map. This ties in with the 7Gold Team's interdisciplinary unit focusing on Illinois and the Mississippi River. There will be a project related to this that students will be completing in small groups with most of the work done in class. Students will be given project guidelines and a grading rubric the end of next week.

The first part of October we will begin our work with geometry in Chapter 2. This begins with some practice recognizing visual patterns and a review of basic geometry terms such as line, line segment, and ray. Students will be expected to classify angles according to size and classify pairs of angles as adjacent, vertical, supplementary, or complementary. Triangle classification, both by sides and angles, will be reviewed and we will be exploring characteristics of congruent triangles. Quadrilaterals will also be classified based on their angles and sides. Students will be expected to identify the parts of a circle and recognize the relationships between these parts. We will take some time to examine a variety of 3-dimensional figures. There are no extra materials needed for this chapter; if we have time to do some constructions with angle or line segment bisectors, students will be provided with a compass and straightedge. With all the different geometric shapes that I expect the students to be able to recognize or draw in this chapter, accurate and complete notes are essential. It would be very helpful if students could devote an extra 10-15 minutes each day

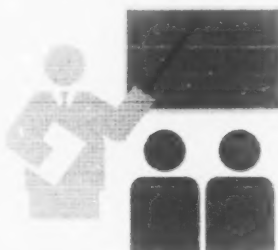
reviewing their notes and practicing drawing these figures. The written assignments in this chapter will be brief, allowing for this extra study time.

Many of the geometric figures we are examining in this chapter are present in our daily lives. Perhaps you and your child can take some time during the course of this chapter to seek out examples around you.

Teachers are often asked by parents for ways they can help their children succeed at school. I'm attaching a tip sheet several other teachers have helped me to compile that may give you some new ideas. I hope they will be helpful.

Sincerely yours,
Jan Eilers

Appendix M
Sample of Chapter Newsletter - Grade 8



First Quarter
August 27, 1997
Chapter 1 Newsletter

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Welcome to a brand new school year! I am anxious to begin the year as your student's math teacher. I hope it will be a fulfilling and fun year for you, your child, and me.

Because I am in the process of obtaining my master's degree, the students in my classes will be involved in a study for one of my courses. From time to time, I will be asking for your input on different ideas. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. This study will involve the successful completion of all homework assigned along with open communication lines among your student, you, and me. Attached to this newsletter, you will find a parent survey. I would greatly appreciate it if you would please fill this survey out and return it to me as soon as possible. Again, thank you for your cooperation.

Your student's education is based on a three-way interaction. That interaction includes you, your child, and the teacher. Through this coming year, I will be sending home chapter newsletters explaining the upcoming book chapter. This will include such information as materials needed by your child for successful completion of the chapter, objectives of the chapter which I will cover in class, and learning obstacles I foresee. Hopefully, these newsletters will strengthen the bond of communication among the three of us and, because of this, will facilitate your child's learning process.

Our textbook is entitled Middle Grades Mathematics, an Interactive Approach. It is published by Prentice-Hall. The eighth grade book is called Course Three because it follows the course already set in place in grades six and seven. It is a rather challenging text including practice problems, hands-on activities, problem solving experiences, and much needed reading ability. In my opinion, it is an excellent text because of its ties with real world situations.

The first chapter we will study is entitled "Drawing Conclusions from Data." Why do we study this material? Much information concerning our society comes in the

form of graphs, tables, and organized data. We must be able to read these forms of information and be prepared to interpret their meaning.

The following objectives will be covered in this chapter:

1. Interpret circle, bar, and line graphs.
2. Analyze graphs as to any false information they might give.
3. Create histograms and frequency tables.
4. Calculate mean, median, and mode from a set of data.
5. Construct a survey.
6. Make scatter plots.
7. Show data on stem-and-leaf plots and box-and-whiskers plots.
8. Choose the correct graph to display a set of data.
9. Decide if a problem has sufficient information given so it can be solved.
10. Be able to know which information to disregard when solving a problem.

In my opinion, the section on problem-solving is excellent and will help students overcome some of their "word problem anxiety"!

Some learning obstacles that I foresee in this chapter include the concepts of box-and-whiskers plots and the positive and negative correlation in scatter plots. Scatter plots were introduced in seventh grade, and box-and-whiskers plots will be introduced this year. So as you can see, these are very new concepts for your child in the field of data-gathering. Students enjoy the idea of learning new material instead of always starting the new year with a lot of boring review. There is just enough review in the chapter, however, to help the student keep up his/her confidence as a math student.

Materials which will be needed for the completion of this chapter include loose leaf notebook paper, sharpened pencils, eraser, spiral notebook used as a journal and for note-taking (This will be an ongoing idea through the entire year.), calculator, quarter-inch graph paper, colored pencils (optional), and a metric ruler.

Again, I am truly looking forward to an exciting year of mathematics for all of us. I will keep the lines of communication open, as I hope you will too. **To help keep these lines of communication open, I am asking that you sign each of your student's homework assignments before they are turned in.** Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have a question, comment, or suggestion. When the three of us work together, your child's math learning experience will be a positive one.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Mona Welvaert
8 Black math teacher

Appendix N
Sample of Tips Sheet Sent to Parents

Tips for Parents to Help Your Child Succeed

Since a number of parents have asked how they can best help their children succeed with their schoolwork, the following list of suggestions has been compiled.

These could be posted in a convenient spot in the home and hopefully used frequently.

- _____ Talk with your child about his/her school day.
- _____ Provide a quiet place to study and the necessary materials.
- _____ Help your child schedule regular study time.
- _____ Check the assignment notebook regularly.
- _____ Assist with homework as needed.
- _____ Encourage improvement.
- _____ Post examples of good work.
- _____ Praise positive effort.
- _____ Encourage your child to read for pleasure.
- _____ Promote writing in the home.
- _____ Talk about goals.
- _____ Show how you use math in your daily life at home and at work.
- _____ Choose some family activities that have an educational value.

Appendix O
Summary of Parent - Teacher Contacts for Seventh Grade
First Semester of 1998 - 1998 School Year

84 phone calls first semester - 43 positive and 41 negative including 32 related to missing, late, or incomplete assignments.

213 mid-term progress reports (represents first and second quarter) - 158 with only positive comments and 55 with at least one negative comment.

29 "good news" notes sent.

Conferences - 50 (up from previous year) students out of a 136. (36.8%)

Open House 63 students represented out of 136 math students at that time. (46.3%) up compared to previous year.

100% homework - 60/105 (57.1%) first quarter and 46/105 (43.8%) second quarter

24 certificates sent to parents for consistently signing homework.

Sent 132 weekly reports, 8 students for 12 weeks, 2 students for 10 weeks, and 2 students for 7 weeks. 86 reports were returned signed - 65.1%. All had C-, D, or F average when started - 2nd quarter grade - 1 B, 4 C, 3 D, and 4 F. 3 raised 1 grade, 2 raised 2 grades, 6 stayed about the same, and 1 dropped 1 grade. Had to make repeat phone calls to 5 homes because not being signed - turned out not being taken home - phone call remedied that.

Appendix P
Summary of Parent - Teacher Contacts for Eighth Grade
First Semester of 1998 - 1998 School Year

60 phone calls first semester - 19 positive and 41 negative

222 mid-term progress reports (represents first and second quarter) - 142 with only positive comments and 80 with at least one negative comment.

22 "good news" notes sent.

Conferences - 35 students out of a 113. (31.0%)

100% homework - 26/113 (23.0%) first quarter and 35/108 (32.4%) second quarter

Sent 58 weekly reports to a total of 20 students. Only 22 were returned signed.

Appendix Q
Sample of Second Parent Survey - January, 1998

PARENT SURVEY

The following questions were designed to help me understand your feelings and opinions about the first semester of this school year. Your answers will let me know about any changes you have made and how effective some of my practices have been. Circle one answer for each question. Please feel free to make comments. It would be helpful if this survey could be returned within the next week. Thank you for your help.

1. How often do you ask your child about his/her day?

Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day.

Comments:

2. How often do you call Classroom Connection?

Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day.

Comments:

3. How often do you check your child's assignment notebook?

Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day.

Comments:

4. How often do you check to see if your child's homework is complete?

Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day.

Comments:

5. How often do you help your child with homework?

Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day.

Comments:

6. How would you describe the impact the chapter newsletters have had on your ability to help your child in math this year?

None Very little Some A great deal

Comments:

7. In your opinion, how important is communication between teacher and parent when a child becomes a middle level student?

Only a little Moderately Extremely

Comments:

8. How many contacts (written, phone, or in person) have you had with your child's math teacher? Do not include report cards or mid-term progress reports.

None 1 2-3 4 or more

Comments:

9. How do you feel about the number and quality of contacts you have had with your child's math teacher?

Displeased Satisfied Very pleased

Comments:

10. How helpful did you find the mid-term progress reports?

Not at all Somewhat Extremely

Comments:

11. How would you rate the contacts you have had this year with school personnel?

Very unpleasant Somewhat unpleasant Pleasant Very pleasant

Comments:

Appendix R
Summary of Responses to Second Parent Survey - January, 1998

There were 50 surveys returned from parents of seventh graders and 42 from parents of eighth graders.

1. How often do you ask your child about his/her day?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Never
7th grade parent	0	1	5	4	40
8th grade parent	0	1	3	11	27

Comments: I feel it is important to ask. She doesn't like to offer much.
Get minimal response.
When she seems to have had a gloomy day.

2. How often do you call Classroom Connection?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently
7th grade parent	18	11	12	6
8th grade parent	14	15	9	3

Comments: We call often - not always updated by all teachers.
She knows what she has to do. I never remember it.
No phone.

3. How often do you check your child's assignment notebook?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th grade parent	6	8	14	15	7
8th grade parent	6	13	8	10	3

Comments: I need to do this more often. When it is brought home.
Makes her feel I don't trust her. Often too cryptic to understand.

4. How often do you check to see if your child's homework is complete?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th grade parent	4	1	5	11	28
8th grade parent	1	3	8	15	14

Comments: I don't check, but ask if complete. Don't have to.
I ask every day. When it is brought home.
I trust her.

5. How often do you help your child with homework?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th grade parent	2	7	21	14	5
8th grade parent	0	6	23	9	4

Comments: Usually has no problems. When she needs help.
He doesn't ask for help. He gets angry and close minded.

6. How would you describe the impact the chapter newsletters have had on your ability to help your child in math this year?

	None	Very little	Some	A great deal
7th grade parent	3	3	29	10
8th grade parent	3	11	20	3

Comments: I have received school wide information I haven't seen elsewhere.
 This book is terrible. Not sure I've seen all of them.
 I go by what I know. Have not received any.
 First one I've seen.

7. In your opinion, how important is communication between teacher and parent when a child becomes a middle level student?

	Only a little	Moderately	Extremely
7th grade parent	0	11	38
8th grade parent	0	16	24

Comments: Not easy - 8 different teachers. Extremely difficult.
 Communications helps alleviate concerns of new middle level parents.
 Becomes important because less activities that require parental involvement and students want parents involved less.

8. How many contacts (written, phone, or in person) have you had with your child's math teacher? Do not include report cards or mid-term progress reports.

	None	1	2 -3	4 or more
7th grade parent	18	13	13	4
8th grade parent	21	9	7	4

Comments: This is only class I've heard from.
 I would hope if there is a problem, I would hear from teacher.
 Impressed with your calls and caring attitude.

9. How do you feel about the number and quality of contacts you have had with your child's math teacher?

	Displeased	Satisfied	Very pleased
7th grade parent	1	17	22
8th grade parent	3	23	6

Comments: Open house only contact - positive.
 They were good. Very pleased with positive note.

10. How helpful did you find the mid-term reports?

	Not at all	Somewhat	Extremely
7th grade parent	0	11	37
8th grade parent	2	16	22

Comments: Not all classes on it, but helped realize a problem we are working on.

11. How would you rate the contacts you have had this year with school personnel?

	Very unpleasant	Somewhat unpleasant	Pleasant	Very pleasant
7th grade parent	0	3	27	16
8th grade parent	3	4	28	6

Comments: Teachers good - administrators not so accommodating.

Most teachers have little communication with parents. Call to meet one teacher and end up meeting with the "team".

Many attempts at information never responded to - some teachers never call back.

Appendix S
Invitation to Homework Seminar



October 22, 1997

Dear Parents,

As a means of trying to help some of our students, the teachers of the Eight Black Team would like to invite you to attend our Homework Help Parent Conference. We have identified certain students who exhibit a need for additional assistance in their homework skills. The workshop will be held on the evening of Tuesday, November 4, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in room 118 and the library.

The purpose of this conference is to get students and parents together with teachers and administrators. Our goal is to improve the quality of homework and make some suggestions on how you, the parent, can assist your child in his homework. The conference will be for both student and parent(s).

We hope you and your child will be able to attend the Homework Help Parent Conference. We look forward to seeing you on Tuesday, November 4.

Sincerely,
Teachers of the Eight Black Team

Appendix T
Sample of Weekly Math Report for At-risk Students

Math Report

Name: _____

Date: _____

Grade: _____

Citizenship: _____

Homework complete?

Participating in class?

Grades on recent quizzes or tests:

Comments:

Parent Signature:

Questions or Comments?

Appendix U
Sample of Cooperative Learning Lesson Plan - Grade 7

Subject: Math

Grade Level: 7th grade

Content: Project using Illinois road map in conjunction with interdisciplinary unit.

Warm-up activity: We had already spent some time previously finding the best route and distance between two cities.

Method for forming groups: chosen by teacher to create an ability mix

Group size: 3 for most groups but a couple of groups of two

Student Roles: Money manager (responsible for double checking all prices and for evaluating the total), Schedule Maker (responsible for writing up the schedule of activities that had been agreed upon by group), Trip Organizer(responsible for keeping group on task and for completing the final copy of project)

Social Skills: each member giving input to decisions, accomplishing the duties of their role

Tasks to be accomplished: The group will decide on a destination, chosen from 3 possible cities, and plan a weekend trip for two. There is a budget of \$400 to cover all expenses. They are to explain why they chose their destination. They are to map out a route and explain choice of route, travel time and costs. The various activities and meals are to be explained and a cost given for each one. They will be given appropriate meal and lodging costs for the three

different population possibilities. A written report relating all this will be turned in for a group grade.

Special materials needed: Illinois highway map

Assignment directions and grading rubric follow.

WEEKEND TRIP FOR TWO

1. Choose one of these 3 cities: Chicago, Springfield, or Galena. Plan a weekend trip for 2 from Moline to that city. You have a budget of \$400 which must cover all food, transportation, lodging, and entertainment expenses. Your trip will begin on Friday afternoon/evening and last until you return Sunday evening.

2. Write a report containing information about your journey. This report must be in ink or word processed with writing on one side only and have a cover page. The cover page contains a title, the date, your period number, and the names of the group.

The first paragraph identifies the city you chose and an explanation of why it was your choice (perhaps distance was important, perhaps the cost decided it for you, perhaps you chose it because of the activities that were available, etc.).

The second paragraph is the beginning of your trip. Explain when you left (Friday afternoon or evening). Give complete directions for the route you followed including highway numbers and direction (ex. south on Interstate 76). Explain why you chose this particular route. Figure out the mileage to reach your destination and the time it took you to get there. Using the mileage, compute the amount of gas used to make the trip (remember you used gas to return home also) and how much that gas cost.

Write additional paragraphs explaining your schedule of activities for the entire weekend (Friday night, all day Saturday, and most of the day Sunday). Identify where you ate (fast food?, family?, fancy? name the restaurant if you wish), slept (hotel or camped), drove (you may need to add extra gas money for this), and what you did for entertainment (give all details). Include with these items the expense for each one (ex. fast food for \$14, movie for 2 for \$7). Remember any extra expenses such as souvenirs or shopping.

In the last paragraph give your total cost. It must be \$400 or less.

3. Use the chart below and the gas information for your calculations.

Population of the city	1 to 99,999	100,000 to 999,999	over 1,000,000
Cost of food per meal for ONE person. Tax and tip are included.			
Fast Food	\$5	\$5	\$5
Family Restaurant	\$7	\$10	\$12
Fancy Restaurant	\$12	\$17	\$20
Lodging for one night for TWO people.			
Hotel	\$40	\$60	\$100
Camping	\$10	\$15	no camping

Your car gets 20 miles to a gallon of gas and gas costs \$1.10 per gallon.

Weekend Trip for Two

	Yes	No
First Paragraph:		
City is named. (1 point)	_____	_____
Gives explanation of why chose city. (1 point)	_____	_____
Second Paragraph:		
Gives complete, accurate directions. (2 points)	_____	_____
Explains why route was chosen. (1 point)	_____	_____
Mileage is accurate(within 10% of total).(2 points)	_____	_____
Time is reasonable. (1 point)	_____	_____
Amount of gas (round trip) is correct. (1 point)	_____	_____
Cost of gas is correct. (1 point)	_____	_____
Third - ? Paragraphs:		
Detailed schedule is included for entire weekend. (3 points)	_____	_____
Types of restaurants and lodging and other activities are properly explained. (4 points)	_____	_____
Costs are accurate for food and lodging for the city. (4 points)	_____	_____
Last Paragraph:		
Total cost is accurate. (1 point)	_____	_____
Cost is \$400 or less. (1 point)	_____	_____
General Requirements:		
Title page is complete. (1 point)	_____	_____
Project is neatly done. (1 point)	_____	_____
Extra credit:		
More elaboration and detail given such as charts, tables, etc. (1 - 2 points)	_____	_____
Evidence of additional research such as interviews, library, travel agency, etc. (1 - 2 points)	_____	_____
Costs for using an alternative mode of transportation have been researched. (1 - 2 points)	_____	_____
Grading scale:		
A (23-25)		
B (20-22)		
C (18,19)		
D (15-17)		
F (below 15)		

Appendix V
Sample of Multiple Intelligence Lesson Plan - Grade 8

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE LESSON PLAN

Lesson Name: Factor Trees

Targeted Intelligences: Visual / Spatial

Supporting Intelligences: Logical / Mathematical, Intrapersonal, Interpersonal

Thinking Skills: Recall, Imagine, Analyze, Apply a Principle

Social Skills: Cooperate, Listen, Encourage

Content Focus: 8th grade math; prime-factoring of 2, 3, and 4-digit numbers

Materials: Construction paper, colored pencils, crayons, computer paper, poster board, art supplies needed to convey idea (i.e. glitter, paint, "snow")

Task Focus: Students will be asked to sit quietly and imagine themselves walking through a forest in the wintertime. They are to imagine the sights and sounds of trees, plants, animals, and colors that they might encounter. They suddenly come upon an unusual tree. They will store this image in their minds.

Next, each student will be assigned a 2, 3, or 4-digit number to be prime-factored.

Using any art supply or medium, they will create a picture of the unusual tree they found in their forest and prime factor their assigned number on it, either in the branches or in the trunk.

Product: Each student will turn in a factor tree with the factored number upon it. The tree will be a creation of the image they saw mentally while "walking" in a winter forest.

Problem: Each student will be responsible for prime factoring his assigned number on a tree of his creation. The student may use any art supplies available to him from our classroom, the art room, or home. He will be given 2 days to complete the assignment.

Activity:

1. Students will imagine that they are walking in a winter forest.
2. They should be aware of sights and sounds.
3. As they walk along, they come upon a special tree.
4. They are to create this tree either two or three-dimensionally using any available art supplies at school or home.
5. They will be assigned a two, three or four-digit number.

6. The students will prime factor their assigned number on their tree. They will be producing a factor tree symbolized by a tree from their imagination.
7. Students will be given two days to complete their task.
8. Students will post their trees on a wall-sized bulletin board in the classroom. The bulletin board will be prepared ahead of time with snow-covered ground and blue sky.
9. After school, students may come in to add animals, mountains, snowflakes, lakes, etc. to add to the scenery of the bulletin board.

Rubric for Factor Tree Forest

CRITERIA

1) Follow directions

- 3 points Composite number > 100 factored correctly
- 2 points Composite number < 100 factored correctly
- 1 point Prime number factored correctly

2) Creativeness

- 3 points Original, no notebook paper, no typing paper
- 2 points Used typing paper
- 1 point Used notebook paper

3) Neatness

- 3 points Colorful, pleasing to the eye
- 2 points Ink, pleasing to the eye
- 1 point Pencil, sloppy work

8 - 9	A	A - 9 will add 20 points to quarter grade
7	B	A - 8 will add 18 points to quarter grade
6	C	B - will add 16 points to quarter grade
5	D	C - will add 14 points to quarter grade
0 - 4	F	D - will add 12 points to quarter grade
		F - turned in on time will add 10 points to quarter grade
		Nothing turned in will be a zero

1 day late will drop the grade 1 letter

2 days late will give you 1/2 credit

3 or more days late will result in a zero and cannot be made up

Appendix W
Sample of Seventh Grade Teacher Weekly Reflection

Week of: September 29 - October 5, 1997

Actions Taken:

Made 1 "good news" phone call.

Students worked most of the week in their cooperative groups on the Trip project.

Multiple intelligences addressed: verbal/linguistic in the written format of project; visual spatial in using the map on the project and the half day we worked with visual patterns; musical/rhythmic in the song I created about line, line segment, and ray; bodily/kinesthetic in the acting out of line, line segment, and ray with "point people"

Students filled out a reflection page about their feelings about the groups participation and their own personal participation in the project.

Contacted parents of 9 at-risk students about weekly report card.

Prepared the cards for the 9 students.

Started record sheet for the at-risk students

In RAP, all teachers did a survey with students to determine their multiple intelligence strengths.

Since the numerous positive mid-term reports arrived home this week, sent no "good news" notes.

No out of class assignments so no phone calls home about homework; no mention yet of reward for class 100% homework and no recording of parent signatures for same reason.

7th grade team is not involved in homework seminar so I will not mention again in journal.

Reflection:

PLUSES (+)	MINUSES (-)	INTERESTING (?)
Students loved the time we worked with visual patterns.		Fun to see different aspects of student behavior when in group.
Most of the students enjoyed the song about line, line segment, and ray even though they thought I was crazy.	Some of the groups did not cooperate well or accomplish much.	Interesting to see that some students have a totally unrealistic view of their contribution to project.
Students liked using point people to demonstrate line, ray, and line segment.	I feel that I should have been more "on top" of these noncooperating groups.	
Many positive comments about the project on their evaluations. A number said they could have never done it alone. Grades were better than on individual activities so far.	A number of members in one class couldn't handle the departure from normal math class with the song and made it impossible to continue to the dismay of their classmates.	It is fascinating to see how three people in the same group can have entirely different views of how they worked together.
Parents were delighted about weekly report card and pleased that I cared enough to do it.		
Positive personal comments from one parent I called made my day.		
Students really enjoyed multiple intelligence activity in RAP.		

Comments, Notes: Some aspects of the project went better than last year and others did not go as well. I think they should have had one less day to work on this because a number of groups did not seem to use the last day well. Perhaps instead of having them take on the roles that they did, they could split up the days of the trip between them and do some of the work on their own at home. This might even out the work load a little, make each person more responsible, and take less days from the classtime. I

knew two of the groups were not working as cooperatively as I hoped but there seems to be a couple more that I was unaware of. I've got to somehow be more aware of this next time. I also am going to stress that when the group has trouble with someone refusing to do his share, they need to come to me immediately. They have to be made to understand that this is not tattling. I was disappointed that, even with the very precise grading rubric on the back of the directions and my numerous references to it, several groups did not do key points. But they did follow directions much better than in previous years which I attribute to the better directions and the rubric. I love rubrics! They are more work in the beginning, but there is a big pay off at the end. I do think this project gets better each year, but there were still several groups who did poorly. But for over 50% of the students the project grade raised their quiz average and that is progress. I still wonder if it is worth all the time. I was happy to see the number of students that reflected that they had fun and enjoyed their partners. I was disappointed by how many disliked their partners, but knowing the work ethic of several of these students, I could understand their unhappiness. I still don't know how to get around the problem of students who are absent frequently when you are doing a group project. My biggest problem is that I have too high expectations and actually believed that every group could have earned an A if they wanted to work for it. Unfortunately, some of the students may never have that kind of motivation.

The lesson on visual patterns was so much fun this year. The kids had a great time and almost everyone wanted to go to the board to put up the next member in one pattern or another. I think part of the success was because I felt more comfortable this year.

The song about line, line segment, and ray went well. Of course, they all acted like I had lost my mind, but they still enjoyed it. If it only helps a few students remember the differences between these figures, it will be worth the risk of looking like a fool. Actually, I am getting used to this and I feel less unsure and foolish each time I try one of these. I am very proud of myself for being able to write the little song. Of course, the rest of my team thinks I have lost my mind. The point people to act out line, line segment, and ray went pretty well also. I would have never thought to do this before these classes so I have learned a couple of new ideas that I can use, even in math class. The only drawback to the point people was when my line practically ran over a teacher in the hallway and I had to try to explain to her what we were doing. She teaches the TMH class so she is used to almost anything.

We had done the RAP activity where the students completed a questionnaire to see what intelligences were their strengths this week. It was a perfect lead in to the visual patterns and why I used the song and the point people.

Even though the project was not as positive as I had hoped, the week still turned out to be a success with the fun we had with all the new activities. I just have to keep making myself try these new and crazy ideas because, so far anyway, they seem to be working. And it doesn't hurt that the kids are having fun in boring, old math class.

Appendix X
Sample of Eighth Grade Teacher's Weekly Reflection

Week of October 14-17

Actions Taken:

We started a new chapter this week concerning pre-algebra. I implemented a lesson using a human number line. This lesson involved kinesthetic intelligence, mathematical/logical intelligence, and visual/spatial intelligence. The class enjoyed it!

I also used cooperative learning this week. Students worked in pairs working on a problem-solving activity. One representative for each problem discussed strategy and answer to the class at the board.

Because of a short week (Columbus Day), I did not send Good News Notes.

I continued to send weekly math report cards.

I'm working on designing a certificate to be given to the students with 100% of the homework turned in on time.

Reflections:

PLUS:

1. Many volunteers for human number line.
2. Variety of topics in our math series - finished geometry - now pre-algebra
3. Class liked working in pairs on problem-solving activity.

MINUS:

1. Only 4 of 10 math report cards were signed and returned.
2. Because of copy problems at our school, my third chapter newsletter will not be ready at the start of Chapter Three.

INTERESTING:

1. Many different strategies used to solve word problems in cooperative learning activity

Appendix Y
Sample of Second Student Survey, January, 1998

Student Survey

Please answer the following, based on the first semester of this school year. Circle one answer for each question.

1. How often do you ask for help outside of class?
 Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day
2. How often do you participate in class?
 Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day
3. How often do you ask questions when you do not understand?
 Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day
4. How much time do you spend on homework on an average day?
 None 30 min. 1 hour 2 hours More than 2 hours
5. How often do you call Classroom Connection?
 Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day
6. How often does your homework suffer because of other activities?
 Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Always
7. How often do you turn in your homework?
 Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Always
8. How much did cooperative learning (group work) help your understanding of math this year?
 Not at all Very little Some A lot
9. What are your feelings about the journal writing done in math class this year?
 Didn't like it Found it difficult to do Found it helpful No opinion

10. How often do you ask your parents for help with your homework?
Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Always
11. How often do your parents ask you about your school day?
Never Seldom Sometimes Frequently Every day
12. How concerned are your parents about your grades?
Not at all Very little Somewhat Very much Extremely
13. How would you compare the difficulty of the math material this year to what you had last year?
Less difficult The same More difficult Much more difficult
14. Compared to last year, how much time did you spend on homework this year?
Much less Less The same More Much more
15. How would you rate yourself as a math student?
Weak Not very strong Average Good Excellent
16. How would you describe your understanding of math this year as compared to last year?
Much worse Worse The same Better Much better

Appendix Z
Summary of Response to Student Surveys - January, 1998

This represents 109 seventh grade students and 108 eighth grade students.

The total number of answers for a particular question may differ from the total number of students surveyed because some students chose not to answer all questions.

1. How often do you ask for help outside of class?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	2	6	11	4	1
7th - #2	1	12	10	3	13
7th - #3	3	9	16	1	1
7th - #4	4	4	15	6	0
7th - Total	10	31	52	14	2
8th - #1	1	6	12	5	2
8th - #2	3	5	13	15	3
8th - #3	1	8	14	5	0
8th - #4	2	7	10	4	1
8th - Total	7	26	49	29	6

2. How often do you participate in class?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	0	2	7	12	2
7th - #2	0	0	12	8	7
7th - #3	0	5	6	9	10
7th - #4	1	3	7	9	9
7th - Total	1	10	32	38	28
8th - #1	1	6	7	9	3
8th - #2	2	6	11	5	5
8th - #3	0	3	15	6	4
8th - #4	0	2	8	6	8
8th - Total	3	17	41	26	20

3. How often do you ask questions when you do not understand?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	0	5	8	9	1
7th - #2	1	3	11	10	2
7th - #3	1	5	10	12	2
7th - #4	2	6	5	13	3
7th - Total	4	19	34	44	8
8th - #1	1	2	9	11	3
8th - #2	3	6	10	8	2
8th - #3	1	6	10	8	3
8th - #4	0	7	6	9	2
8th - Total	5	21	35	36	10

4. How much time do you spend on homework on an average day?

	None	30 min.	1 hour	2 hours	> 2 hours
7th - #1	0	5	15	3	0
7th - #2	0	6	14	6	1
7th - #3	1	8	14	6	1
7th - #4	0	7	15	5	2
7th - Total	1	26	58	20	4
8th - #1	1	15	8	1	1
8th - #2	0	15	7	6	1
8th - #3	1	17	9	0	1
8th - #4	1	13	5	4	1
8th - Total	3	60	29	11	4

5. How often do you call Classroom Connection?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	8	7	6	2	0
7th - #2	11	9	1	5	1
7th - #3	11	12	4	1	2
7th - #4	10	9	4	5	1
7th - Total	40	37	15	13	4
8th - #1	8	10	6	1	1
8th - #2	16	5	4	4	0
8th - #3	6	12	9	1	0
8th - #4	7	7	8	1	1
8th - Total	37	34	27	7	2

6. How often does your homework suffer because of other activities?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	4	10	6	3	0
7th - #2	9	9	6	2	1
7th - #3	8	7	9	4	2
7th - #4	8	10	9	1	0
7th - Total	29	36	30	10	3
8th - #1	5	5	8	8	0
8th - #2	9	8	7	5	0
8th - #3	12	7	4	4	1
8th - #4	8	6	8	2	0
8th - Total	34	26	27	19	1

7. How often do you turn in homework?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	0	0	0	7	16
7th - #2	0	0	4	7	16
7th - #3	0	0	4	6	20
7th - #4	1	1	2	4	21
7th - Total	1	1	10	24	73
8th - #1	0	1	3	5	17
8th - #2	0	1	0	9	19
8th - #3	1	1	0	8	18
8th - #4	0	0	4	6	14
8th - Total	1	3	7	28	68

8. How much did cooperative learning (group work) help your understanding of math this year?

	Not at all	Very little	Some	A lot
7th - #1	0	8	9	6
7th - #2	3	5	11	8
7th - #3	5	5	12	8
7th - #4	3	5	13	8
7th - Total	11	23	45	30
8th - #1	2	5	14	5
8th - #2	3	5	15	6
8th - #3	0	6	18	4
8th - #4	1	3	9	11
8th - Total	6	19	56	26

9. What are your feelings about the journal writing done in math class this year?

	Didn't like it	Found it difficult	Found it helpful	No opinion
7th - #1	5	1	5	11
7th - #2	9	2	7	10
7th - #3	9	3	10	7
7th - #4	3	0	11	15
7th - Total	26	6	33	43
8th - #1	14	2	3	8
8th - #2	13	4	5	7
8th - #3	14	3	4	7
8th - #4	12	1	2	9
8th - Total	53	10	14	31

10. How often do you ask your parents for help with your homework?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	2	6	7	5	2
7th - #2	1	8	14	3	2
7th - #3	3	9	10	5	3
7th - #4	3	5	9	10	2
7th - Total	9	28	40	23	9
8th - #1	1	3	13	8	2
8th - #2	1	5	11	9	3
8th - #3	2	3	12	10	1
8th - #4	2	4	10	6	2
8th - Total	6	15	46	33	8

11. How often do your parents ask you about your school day?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Every day
7th - #1	0	1	1	9	11
7th - #2	1	1	0	10	15
7th - #3	1	3	5	1	19
7th - #4	0	3	3	7	16
7th - Total	2	8	9	27	61
8th - #1	2	1	2	10	12
8th - #2	2	4	3	9	11
8th - #3	0	1	2	10	15
8th - #4	0	1	4	6	13
8th - Total	4	7	11	35	51

12. How concerned are your parents about your grades?

	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Very much	Extremely
7th - #1	0	1	1	8	12
7th - #2	0	0	1	6	21
7th - #3	1	0	2	4	23
7th - #4	0	0	1	8	20
7th - Total	1	1	5	26	76
8th - #1	0	0	1	11	15
8th - #2	0	1	1	10	17
8th - #3	0	0	3	12	13
8th - #4	0	0	2	9	13
8th - Total	0	1	7	42	58

13. How would you compare the difficulty of the math material this year to what you had last year?

	Less difficult	The same	More difficult	Much more difficult
7th - #1	3	8	11	0
7th - #2	7	8	11	2
7th - #3	9	7	12	2
7th - #4	6	10	12	1
7th - Total	25	33	46	5
8th - #1	0	6	18	3
8th - #2	0	9	16	4
8th - #3	2	4	15	7
8th - #4	2	3	15	4
8th - Total	4	22	64	18

14. Compared to last year, how much time did you spend on homework this year?

	Much less	Less	The same	More	Much more
7th - #1	0	4	7	15	3
7th - #2	2	1	5	15	7
7th - #3	0	7	11	8	2
7th - #4	0	6	4	9	3
7th - Total	2	18	27	47	15
8th - #1	1	3	6	14	3
8th - #2	0	1	8	14	6
8th - #3	0	2	9	11	6
8th - #4	0	1	8	11	4
8th - Total	1	7	31	50	19

15. How would you rate yourself as a math student?

	Weak	Not very strong	Average	Good	Excellent
7th - #1	0	2	6	12	2
7th - #2	0	1	9	14	4
7th - #3	1	4	8	14	3
7th - #4	3	2	5	12	7
7th - Total	4	9	28	52	16
8th - #1	2	4	10	7	4
8th - #2	4	5	8	11	0
8th - #3	2	3	10	10	3
8th - #4	2	2	9	9	2
8th - Total	10	14	37	37	9

16. How would you describe your understanding of math this year as compared to last year?

	Much worse	Worse	The same	Better	Much better
7th - #1	0	1	6	9	5
7th - #2	1	1	5	17	4
7th - #3	1	3	5	13	8
7th - #4	0	3	10	7	9
7th - Total	2	8	26	46	26
8th - #1	3	1	11	11	1
8th - #2	2	6	8	10	2
8th - #3	2	5	9	10	2
8th - #4	0	8	3	13	0
8th - Total	7	20	31	44	5

Appendix AA
Sample of Student Certificate

**Certificate of
Achievement**

This award congratulates and commends

for exceptional performance in

this _____ day of _____, 19____

Signed _____

Appendix BB
Homework Seminar Packet

HOMework HELP



PARENT CONFERENCE

STUDY CHECK UP

Think about the place where you usually do your studying at home. Then read each item below and mark it "Yes" or "No", indicating if it is in that study setting right now. Go back over the list and check each item you think you could get and put in your study setting.

- | | <u>YES</u> | <u>NO</u> | <u>COULD GET</u> |
|--|------------|-----------|------------------|
| 1. A supply of paper | | | |
| 2. Pencils and erasers | | | |
| 3. Pens (black and blue) | | | |
| 4. Ruler | | | |
| 5. Calculator | | | |
| 6. Protractor | | | |
| 7. Compass | | | |
| 8. Scissors | | | |
| 9. Notebook | | | |
| 10. Assignment notebook | | | |
| 11. Large calendar | | | |
| 12. Access to encyclopedias
(If possible) | | | |
| 13. Dictionary | | | |
| 14. Access to thesaurus | | | |
| 15. Library card | | | |
| 16. Clock or watch | | | |
| 17. A place to sit at
(Desk, table, card table) | | | |

STUDY CHECK UP II

Read each statement, then check "Yes" or "No".

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 1. I try to become interested in the topic I am studying. | YES___ NO___ |
| 2. I usually do my assignments on time or before they are due. | YES___ NO___ |
| 3. I usually concentrate on what I am studying. | YES___ NO___ |
| 4. I try to study in a quiet place. | YES___ NO___ |
| 5. I keep the television turned off while I study. | YES___ NO___ |
| 6. While studying, I discourage interruptions from my family and the telephone. | YES___ NO___ |
| 7. I usually study my hardest subject first. | YES___ NO___ |
| 8. I try to complete an assignment before leaving it. | YES___ NO___ |
| 9. I follow a study plan and time schedule. | YES___ NO___ |
| 10. I usually study in the same place every day. | YES___ NO___ |
| 11. I keep my study setting free of distracting materials. | YES___ NO___ |
| 12. I schedule in a few breaks, and I keep them brief. | YES___ NO___ |
| 13. I check and organize my notebook weekly. | YES___ NO___ |
| 14. If I know I will need some help from my mother or father, I will let them know in advance so that they can plan it in their evening also. | YES___ NO___ |

TIPS FOR PARENTS TO HELP YOUR CHILD SUCCEED

Since many parents have asked how they can best help their children succeed with their schoolwork, the following list of suggestions has been compiled in order to be used as a guideline. These may be posted in a convenient spot in the home and hopefully will be used frequently.

- ☐ Talk with your child about his/her school day.
- ☐ Provide a quiet place to study with the necessary materials.
- ☐ Help your child schedule regular study time.
- ☐ Check the assignment notebook regularly and call the Classroom Connection line at 757-7500.
- ☐ Assist with homework as needed.
- ☐ Encourage improvement.
- ☐ Post examples of good work.
- ☐ Praise positive effort.
- ☐ Encourage your child to read for pleasure and occasionally read to them.
- ☐ Promote writing at home.
- ☐ Talk about goals.
- ☐ Show how you use math in your daily life at home and at work.
- ☐ Choose some family activities that have an educational value.
- ☐ Be sure to spend some time with your child each day without the television on.
- ☐ Help your child find a school activity to be involved in. (This could add structure to their daily activities.)

NOTEBOOK CHECK UP

It would be a good idea for parents to go home with their student and go over this checklist together. You may be surprised at what you might find.

1. Take out your notebook.
2. Put a check by each element of notebook organization which you can find in your notebook.

- ☐ Dividers used
- ☐ Papers arranged in order by subject
- ☐ Papers dated
- ☐ Papers titled
- ☐ Place for homework
- ☐ Place for notes from classes
- ☐ Neat handwriting
- ☐ Pockets for "extra" papers (such as permission slips)
- ☐ Supply of unused notebook paper
- ☐ Holder for pencils, pens, etc.
- ☐ Assignment notebook

3. Look over the list above. Give your notebook a grade.

GRADE _____

4. WRITE YOUR REASONING FOR THE GRADE GIVEN.

UNITY

I dreamed I stood in a studio
And watched two sculptors there,
The clay they used was a child's mind
And they fashioned it with care.

One was a teacher...
The tools that teacher used
Were books, music and art.

The other, a parent,
Worked with a guiding hand,
And a gentle and loving heart.

Day after day, the teacher toiled
With touch that was careful, deft, and sure,
While the parent labored by his side
And polished and smoothed it o'er.

And when, at last, their task was done,
They were proud of what they had wrought.
For the things they had molded into the child
Could neither be sold or bought.

And each agrees they would have failed
If each had worked alone.
For behind the parent stood the school,
And behind the teacher, the home.

Author Unknown

Appendix CC

Missing, Late, Incomplete Assignments Second Quarter of 1997 - 1998 School Year

Seventh Grade

Class 1 - 24 students X 22 assignments = 528 total assignments

Late/incomplete - 33 - 6.3%

Missing - 2 - 0.0%

Complete - 493 - 93.4%

Class 2 - 26 students X 23 assignments = 598 total assignments

Late/incomplete - 39 - 6.5%

Missing - 14 - 2.3%

Complete - 545 - 91.1%

Class 3 - 27 students X 23 assignments = 621 total assignments

Late/incomplete - 61 - 9.8%

Missing - 22 - 3.5%

Complete - 538 - 86.6%

Class 4 - 28 students X 23 assignments = 644 total assignments

Late/incomplete - 51 - 7.9%

Missing - 20 - 3.1%

Complete - 573 - 89.0%

Eighth Grade

Class 1 - 26 students X 31 assignments = 806 total assignments

Late/incomplete - 24 - 3.0%

Missing - 95 - 11.8%

Complete - 687 - 85.2%

Class 2 - 29 students X 31 assignments = 899 total assignments

Late/incomplete - 32 - 3.6%

Missing - 96 - 10.7%

Complete - 771 - 85.8%

Class 3 - 28 students X 31 assignments = 868 total assignments

Late/incomplete - 30 - 3.5%

Missing - 128 - 14.7%

Complete - 710 - 81.8%

Class 4 - 25 students X 31 assignments = 775 total assignments

Late/incomplete - 24 - 3.1%

Missing - 124 - 16.0%

Complete - 627 - 80.9%

Note: Only used students who were members of the class the entire quarter.

Appendix DD Comparison of Grades

Seventh grade - used only grades from students who were enrolled entire semester.

Compared to fourth quarter of sixth grade.

Class	Dropped 2 or more grades	Dropped 1 grade	Stayed the same	Raised 1 grade	Raised 2 or more grades
1	1	2	9	5	7
2	0	2	8	9	4
3	3	7	8	8	3
4	2	2	12	10	2
Total	6	13	38	32	16

Compared to first quarter of seventh grade.

Class	Dropped 2 or more grades	Dropped 1 grade	Stayed the same	Raised 1 grade	Raised 2 or more grades
1		1	12	11	
2		1	12	9	2
3		3	18	7	1
4		2	13	12	1
Total		7	55	39	4

Eighth grade - Only used grades from students who were enrolled entire quarter.

Compared to fourth quarter of seventh grade:

Class	Dropped 2 or more grades	Dropped 1 grade	Stayed the same	Raised 1 grade	Raised 2 or more grades
1	3	10	10	2	1
2	2	12	11	2	0
3	3	7	12	2	0
4	3	7	11	2	1
Total	11	36	44	8	2

Compared to first quarter 8th grade.

Class	Dropped 2 or more grades	Dropped 1 grade	Stayed the same	Raised 1 grade	Raised 2 or more grades
1	0	2	13	9	2
2	0	4	13	9	1
3	0	5	17	2	0
4	0	6	11	6	1
Total	0	17	54	26	4